

DISCIPLESHIP

1. The Definition of a Disciple.

a. Disciples are:

- (1) Like David's mighty men (1 Ch 11:10-12:40).
- (2) Followers (Mt 4:19-20, 22; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27-28; Jn 1:37-40, 43).
- (3) Fishers of men (Mt 4:19, 22; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10).
- (4) Like the Old Testament prophets (Mt 5:11-12; Lk 6:22-23).
- (5) The salt of the earth (Mt 5:13).
- (6) The light of the world (Mt 5:14; 10:27).
- (7) Ones who follow Jesus into the boat (Mt 8:23).
- (8) Harvest workers (ἐργάτης)(Mt 9:38; 10:10; 20:1; Lk 10:2), like Prisca and Aquila (Ro 16:3), Urbanus (Ro 16:9), Timothy (Ro 16:21; 1 Th 3:2), Stephanas (1 Co 16:15-16); Epaphroditus (Php 2:25), Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (Php 4:2-3).
- (9) Bondservants (δουλος)(Mt 10:24-25; Lk 12:43), like Paul, Timothy (Php 2:22), and Epaphras (Col 1:7; 4:12).
- (10) Housetop proclaimers (Mt 10:27).
- (11) Ones who deny themselves and take up their cross (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23-24; 14:27).
- (12) Ones who lose their life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel (Mt 10:39; 16:25; Mk 8:35).
- (13) Heads of households (Mt 13:52).
- (14) Ones who take bread from Jesus and give it to the crowds (Mt 14:19; 15:36; 16:11-12).
- (15) Ones who come to be with Jesus to be sent out to preach (Mk 3:13-14).
- (16) Ones who leave everything—house, family, lands—and follow Jesus (Mk 10:28-30; Lk 5:11; Lk 18:29).
- (17) Ones who leave the dead to bury their own dead to go and proclaim God's kingdom (Lk 9:61).
- (18) Ones who put their hand to the plow and don't look back (Lk 9:62).
- (19) Stewards (οικονόμος) whom the master sets over his household (Lk 12:42).
- (20) Ones who "hate" their own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and life (Lk 14:26; Jn 12:25).
- (21) Ones who renounce all they have (Lk 14:33).
- (22) Sowers (σπείρω)(Jn 4:35-37).
- (23) Reapers (θερίζω)(Jn 4:35-37).
- (24) Toilers (κοπιάω)(Jn 4:38), like Mary (Ro 16:6), Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Ro 16:12), Stephanas (1 Co 16:15-16).
- (25) Grains of wheat that fall to the earth and die (Jn 12:24).
- (26) Servants (διάκονος)(Jn 12:26), like Epaphras (Col 1:7), Tychicus (Eph 6:21); Archippus (Col 4:17).
- (27) Ones who confess Jesus openly (Jn 12:42; cf. Jn 19:38).
- (28) Branches that produce much fruit (Jn 15:5, 8).
- (29) Christians (Ac 11:26).
- (30) Soldiers (στρατιώτης), like Timothy (2 Ti 2:3-4).

- (31) Athletes (ἀθλέω), like Timothy (2 Ti 2:5).
- (32) Hard-working farmers (γεωργός), like Timothy (2 Ti 2:6).
- b. Disciples may be male, like the apostles (Mt 10:2-4) or female, like Tabitha (Ac 9:36).
- c. Not every believer is a disciple.
- (1) “Believer” is not synonymous with “disciple.” Believers believe. Disciples follow closely and imitate.
 - (2) Every believer is invited to be a disciple (Jn 8:30-32), but not every believer accepts the invitation (Jn 12:42).
 - (3) In the gospels, there were disciples who were not believers (Jn 6:64). We are not using the terms disciple and believer in this way. For us, disciples are ones who have already believed in Jesus (Jn 2:11; Jn 6:69) and accepted the invitation to follow Jesus in order to become fishers of men (Mt 4:19-20).
 - (4) Many today emphasise “following” Jesus as opposed to “believing in” Jesus. Don’t place following Jesus ahead of believing in him.
- d. Quotes.
- (1) Discipleship is “embracing the adventure of really following Jesus.”¹
 - (2) “A disciple is someone following Christ (‘follow me’), being changed by Christ (‘and I will make you’), and committed to the mission of Christ (‘fishers of men’).”²
 - (3) A disciple is a “learner engaging in an apprentice relationship with a teacher.”³
 - (4) “I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I’m a disciple of His and I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I’m done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits or popularity. I don’t have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognised, or praised or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power. My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear. I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. ...I won’t give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. ...And when He does come for His own, He’ll have no problems recognising me. My colours will be clear!”⁴
 - (5) A disciples is “a person who follows a master teacher to become like him and to carry on his work.”⁵

¹ N. Ripken, *The Insanity of God*, 262.

² Jim Putman, discipleship.org.

³ D. Spader, “Disciple-Making Metrics,” 7.

⁴ Anonymous.

⁵ M. Etheredge, *Invest in a Few*, 13.

2. Salvation and Discipleship.

- a. Sorry, these well-meaning theologians got it wrong.
 - (1) Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
 - (a) The view salvation is costly received its modern impetus from the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who expressed his views in *The Cost of Discipleship*, first published in English in 1949. He wrote of “costly grace” as opposed to “cheap grace,” which he described as “Grace without price; grace without cost,” or “grace without discipleship.”⁶
 - (b) “The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from grace.”⁷
 - (2) John MacArthur.
 - (a) “Faith is not an experiment, but a lifelong commitment. It means taking up the cross daily, giving all for Christ each day with no reservations, no uncertainty, no hesitation. It means nothing is knowingly held back, nothing purposely shielded from His lordship, nothing stubbornly kept from His control.”⁸
- b. Principles.
 - (1) When the conditions of salvation are merged with the conditions of discipleship, great confusion inevitably develops. Salvation because something other than salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. Or the concept of discipleship is watered down.
 - (2) In salvation, Jesus pays the price. In discipleship, we pay the price.
 - (3) For us, salvation is totally free, but discipleship is very costly.⁹
 - (4) The call to salvation differs greatly from the call to discipleship.¹⁰
 - (5) Coming to Jesus differs greatly from coming after Jesus.
 - (a) Unbelievers are invited to come to Jesus.
 - 1) **Mt 11:28** 28 Come to me [Jesus], all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 - 2) **Mt 19:14** 14 ...Jesus said, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.
 - (b) Believers are invited to come after Jesus as disciples.
 - 1) **Mt 16:24** 24 ...Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.
 - 2) **Mk 8:34** 34 ...Calling the crowd to him with his disciples, [Jesus] said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

⁶ D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1963), 45, 47.

⁷ D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1963), 55.

⁸ J. F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988], 202.

⁹ C. C. Bing, “The Cost of Discipleship,” 2.

¹⁰ C. C. Bing, “The Cost of Discipleship,” 2.

- 3) **Lk 9:23** 23 ...[Jesus] said to all, If anyone would come after me [as a disciple], let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.
- (6) The difference between salvation and discipleship is not a paradox.
 - (a) “The difference between discipleship and salvation cannot...be called a paradox. If salvation could somehow be free but costly, then this might be called a paradox. But this attempt by the Lordship Salvation position to maintain theological orthodoxy (justification by faith alone) while demanding a price from the sinner (costly grace) cannot be biblically justified.”¹¹
- c. Quotes.
 - (1) “Jesus’ teaching on discipleship took place well into His ministry and was addressed primarily to His disciples as a further revelation of the kind of commitment He desired of His already saved followers. He explained these conditions against the background of His own commitment that would lead to His death in order to invest them with the fullest significance for those who also desired to follow God’s will.”¹²

3. The Conditions of Discipleship.

- a. Jesus was super clear on the conditions of discipleship. He repeated them over and over again.
- b. A disciple must:
 - (1) Acknowledge Jesus before men (Mt 10:32).
 - (2) Love Jesus more than anyone else (Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26).
 - (a) In this context, the verb “hate” means “love less.” It’s a comparison. The disciples are not to love their families less but to love Jesus more. Loyalty to Jesus must override even the closest family ties.¹³
 - (3) Take up his or her cross (Mt 10:38; 16:24).
 - (4) Lose his or her life for Jesus’ sake (Mt 10:39).
 - (5) Deny him or herself (Mt 16:24).
 - (6) Renounce all that he or she has (Lk 14:33).
 - (7) Abide in Jesus’ teaching (Jn 8:31).
- c. Principles.
 - (1) We are to count the cost of discipleship before we agree to it (Lk 14:28).
 - (2) We are expected to finish what we begin to build (Lk 14:30).
- d. Quotes.
 - (1) “Following Jesus seemed easy enough at first, but that was because they had not followed him very far. It soon became apparent that being a disciple of Christ involved far more than a joyful acceptance of the Messianic promise: it meant the surrender of one’s whole life to the Master in absolute submission to his sovereignty.”¹⁴

¹¹ C. C. Bing, “The Cost of Discipleship,” 10.

¹² C. C. Bing, “The Cost of Discipleship,” 7.

¹³ F. W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 250.

¹⁴ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2010), 50.

- (2) “One simply could not follow Jesus through the course of his life without turning loose of the world, and those who made a pretense of it brought only anguish and tragedy to their souls (Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19).”¹⁵
- (3) If we want to be a disciple, we will have to make major adjustments in our life.¹⁶

4. The Levels of Discipleship.

a. Examples.

- (1) David’s mighty men gained various levels of renown (1 Ch 11-12).
- (2) In Jesus’ ministry, there were:
 - (a) Believers (Jn 2:23, 4:39, 42, 53).
 - 1) The 5000 (Mt 14:21).
 - 2) The 4000 (Mt 15:38).
 - (3) Disciples (Lk 19:37; 1 Co 15:6).
 - (4) The Seventy-two (Lk 10:1).
 - (5) The Twelve (Mt 10:1-2; 19:28; 26:20; Lk 6:13).
 - (6) The Three (Mt 17:1).
 - (7) Peter (Mt 16:17-19).

b. Quotes.

- (1) “God’s agenda is for every believer to be in the ‘much fruit’ category of living.”¹⁷

Discipleship Levels

	Unbeliever	Seeker	Believer	Disciple	Disciple-Maker
Gospels	People	Crowds	The 5000 The 4000	The Twelve The 72	The Three
1 Jn 2:12-14	Unconceived	Unborn	Little child	Young man	Father
Heb 5:12-14	No food	Milk	Milk	Solid food	Solid food
Jn 15:1-8	No fruit	No fruit	Fruit	More fruit	Much fruit
Mt 25:16-18	No talents	No talents	One talent	Four talents	Ten talents
Mt 13:18-23 Lk 8:11-15	Seed on path	Seed on path	Seed on rock Seed among thorns	Seed on good soil	Seed that produces fruit

5. How to Distinguish Disciples from Believers.

a. A disciple:

- (1) Acknowledges Jesus before men (Mt 10:32).
- (2) Takes up his or her cross and follows Jesus (Mt 10:38).
- (3) Loses his life for Jesus’ sake (Mt 10:39).
- (4) Is full of good works and acts of charity (Ac 9:36).
- (5) Is undistractedly devoted to Jesus (1 Co 7:35).
- (6) Is genuinely concerned for the welfare of local churches (Php 2:20).

¹⁵ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2010), 51-52.

¹⁶ H. T. Blackaby and C. V. King, *Experiencing God*, 235.

¹⁷ D. Spader, “Disciple-Making Metrics,” 11.

- (7) Seeks the interests of Jesus, not his or her own interests (Php 2:21).
 - (8) Actively advances the kingdom of God by reaching people for Christ.
 - (9) Has skin in the game, having left the bench and walked on the playing field.
- b. A believer not a disciple:
- (1) Denies Jesus before men (Mt 10:33).
 - (2) Loves father, mother, son, or daughter more than Jesus (Mt 10:37).
 - (3) Doesn't take up his or her cross and follow Jesus (Mt 10:38).

6. The Goal of Discipleship: Christlikeness.

- a. **Lk 6:40** 40 A disciple is not above his teacher [Jesus], but everyone when he is fully trained [in conviction, character, and competence] will be like his teacher [Jesus].

7. Discipleship and Church Leadership.

- a. No one can be an effective elder, deacon, evangelist, pastor, or teacher without first being a disciple (Eph 4:11-12).

8. The Rewards of Discipleship.

- a. Disciples will:
- (1) Find their life (Mt 10:39; 16:25).
 - (2) Know the mysteries of God's kingdom (Mt 13:11).
 - (3) Have an abundance of knowledge (Mt 13:12).
 - (4) See and hear things others don't get to see and hear (Lk 10:23-24).
 - (5) Serve as the heads of households (Mt 13:52; Lk 12:42).
 - (6) Be rewarded by the Son of Man (Mt 16:27).
 - (7) Receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and lands, with persecutions (Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30).
 - (8) Receive eternal life in the age to come (Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30).
 - (9) Possess the kingdom of God, be satisfied, and laugh (Lk 6:20-21).
 - (10) Receive a great reward in heaven (Lk 6:23).
 - (11) Rejoice with other disciples (Jn 4:36).
 - (12) Always have their physical needs provided for (Jn 6:13).
 - (13) Be set free by the truth (Jn 8:31-32).
 - (14) Be honoured by the Father (Jn 12:26).
- b. Quotes.
- (1) "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."¹⁸

¹⁸ Jim Elliott, quoted in H. T. Blackaby and C. V. King, *Experiencing God*, 244.

Bibliography

Bing, Charles C. “The Cost of Discipleship.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*,
Spring 1993, Vol. 6:10.