

# **Biblical Marks of a Disciple**

*as found in Matthew 28*



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# PART 1

## Identifiable Marks of a Disciple of Jesus

### Introduction

The words "disciple" and "disciples" are used nearly 270 times in the New Testament. From the gospels to the church and personal letters, the Bible gives many examples of Christ's immediate and subsequent disciples. How did they live? What were their struggles? Which markers or characteristics stand most prominent among these early disciples of Christ? This paper addresses the marks of a disciple.

Μαθητής (mathetes, disciple) is the word for disciple, meaning "a learner, pupil, or disciple."<sup>1</sup> Μαθητής is different from another term in the education and academic world which is διδάσκαλος (didaskalos, teacher), which refers to the one doing the teaching, or the master teacher.<sup>2</sup> The learning circle of spiritual education and religious training includes the teacher, the learner, the content/lessons, the environment, and the context. The five learning circle factors impact authentic learning and discipleship, but the most foundational is that the disciple follows the teacher and his teachings. Each learning circle factor tremendously

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 386.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. διδάσκαλος, 386.

influences the transfer of information and lifestyle choices to the disciple/learner. Consider the following: the teacher, Jesus, is followed by His disciple. The disciple is learning a lesson from Jesus in each context and environment while hearing the words and seeing the actions that Jesus is sharing. The Μαθητής can only learn from the διδάσκαλος when in His presence or when studying His words. Modern-day disciples of Jesus follow Jesus as articulated in the Scriptures. While focusing primarily on the disciple of Jesus, this paper will consider the other learning circle factors, which establish basic context while elaborating on the marks of a true disciple of Christ.

Before answering the question, "What are the marks of a true disciple of Christ," another must be answered, "Is a disciple defined by what he does, what he learns, or what he becomes?" The textbook definition above suggests it is what one is, "A learner, pupil, or disciple."<sup>3</sup> So a disciple is a learner, he is a pupil/student, and he is a disciple/follower. The *Bible Sense Lexicon* says the predominant use of the term Μαθητής is used 168 times in the following sense, "a student who adheres to (and travels with) a teacher in a pedagogical relationship; especially used of students of spiritual leaders."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 386.

<sup>4</sup> Faithlife, LLC. "Disciple." Logos Bible Software, Computer software. *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, LLC, May 30, 2023. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.disciple.n.01>.

Matthew 28:16-20 is the passage most well known as the "Great Commission." In this scene, the 11 disciples gathered together and walked up the mountain when Jesus told them to meet Him. When they arrive, Jesus appears to them, and the disciples immediately bow down and worship the resurrected Jesus. Jesus proceeds to give another lesson to the disciples. He lets them know that He has been given all the authority of heaven and earth, and because of His victory over sin, death, and hell in the Gospel, they have a message to share. They have a new life in Christ. They have a mission. His message includes how they will walk through life, teaching the Gospel and making disciples. These disciples are instructed to live the words of Christ in the Christian community (other disciples) and to find ways to serve the Lord to further advance the Gospel in their churches and communities worldwide. The phrases, *Worship God*, *Walk with Others*, *Win to Jesus*, and *Rest in Jesus*, summarize this passage well.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 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 always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.  
(Matthew 28:16-20)

Worshipping, Walking, Winning, and Resting are the marks of a disciple of Christ identified in this passage. When a

disciple is worshipping God, walking with others, and winning others to Jesus, he can rest in the Lord. Each of these marks is empowered and enabled by God Himself as He said, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). These four marks also indicate a clear path of discipleship. Thom Rainer and his son, Sam, of Church Answers, suggest, "From the pastor to the nominal church member, there is a sense that church has become too complicated and busy. There is no clear path for someone to grow as a disciple."<sup>5</sup> Discipleship is a journey, and Matthew 28 gives us a clear path to follow.

After describing the frustration of assembling a bunk bed with no instruction or manuals, Adam McClendon, in *Timeless Church: Five Lessons From Acts*, observes that many churches lack a process for discipleship. He says, "They have the plan (to make disciples), but they have no idea really where to begin. They are missing a process for reaching and ministering to others."<sup>6</sup> When following Jesus, a disciple can integrate the marks of a disciple in Matthew 28:16-20 into their life to further their spiritual formation in Christ. These four marks are a natural process and path to discipleship within a local church context. These simple marks are supported and expanded upon by various other passages, citations, and applications.

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<sup>5</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer, Geiger and Rainer Eric, *Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), ebook.

<sup>6</sup> P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 100.



## Mark 1: Disciples Worship God

The eleven disciples' first response to Jesus, when they see Him in Matthew 28:17, is to bow down to Him and worship Him. "Worship" (προσκυνέω) means "to kiss (The hand); to do reverence to, or to bow down."<sup>7</sup> This reverential act is synonymous with the posture of their hearts to Jesus. They believe Jesus is the Messiah. These disciples have trusted Christ for their salvation and are continuing to trust Him. They are worshipping Jesus as God in the flesh, the risen Son of God. Writer and scholar Michael Gorman observes in his book, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*, "In simplest terms...faith is the appropriate response to hearing the gospel (Romans 10)."<sup>8</sup>

However, some disciples wavered. It is not sure which one(s) doubted, but some did. The word "doubted" is the same word Jesus used when rescuing Peter, who walked on water and began to sink in Matthew 14:31.<sup>9</sup> διστάζω (distazo, doubt) means "to doubt, waver."<sup>10</sup> Some of the disciples wavered in their faith,

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<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 122.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 14:31, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 152.

but others remained convinced and completely trusted the resurrected Jesus. The history after that tells of each of these eleven disciples becoming faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus and who, even with moments of doubt, live convinced of their faith that Jesus is the *Savoir*, even giving their own lives for the Gospel of Christ.

A disciple is more than a name, title, occupation, or activity; it is what one is and what he is becoming. A disciple is more than what he is learning or doing; it is what he is. The disciple, with growth, also becomes a discipler. In *Called to Reach*, Rick Yount explains that "The discipler lives a life of biblical character—putting into practice the principles, teachings, and models of the Bible as demonstrated through the life of Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup> The disciple is modeling the life of Jesus. Perhaps a disciple of Christ could define his life this way, "My name is Steve, and I am a disciple of Jesus." The modern Christian travels through life in the presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit of Jesus, the Words of Jesus, and the people of Jesus.

The name "Christian" also implies this definition of a disciple. In Acts 11:26, "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The people witnessing the lives of the Antioch Christians saw these people and adopted the name "Christian." Walter Ewell suggests, "Since members of the group constantly talked about Christ, they were called Christians, meaning the

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<sup>11</sup> William Yount and Mike Barnett, *Called to Reach: Equipping Cross-Cultural Disciplers* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2007), Ebook.

"household" or "partisans" of Christ."<sup>12</sup> "Christian" is a fantastic way for a disciple to be known.

A disciple's worship of Jesus begins with conversion to the Christian faith, including a public profession in Believer's Baptism, continues with faithful love and devotion to the Lord, and results in living the crucified life and practicing self-denial. Why do disciples worship Jesus?

### **Disciples Worship Jesus Because they are Converted to Christianity.**

They came to a place of complete faith and established an ongoing trust in believing the Gospel of the resurrected Son of God. Expanding on the introduction to this mark of worship, observe the following faith conversions to Christ.

- Levi, known to most as Matthew, believed and trusted Jesus in Luke 5:27-28. "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him."
- Peter and Andrew dropped their fishing nets and left their boat following Jesus because of faith. Mark 1:18 states,

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<sup>12</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Christians, Names For," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 432.

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him."

- James and John jump off their fishing boat and left their father to follow Jesus in Matthew 4:22, "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of Zebedee*, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."

### **Disciples Worship Jesus Because They Love Him.**

Most students in school today would not say they "love their teachers." They may like some teachers more than others or enjoy some classes more than other classes. Some would say they love their teacher because of the extra time or helpful investment a particular teacher makes for them. In Christianity, the learner (disciple) is to love His teacher (Jesus). Jesus speaks to this directly in Luke 14:26-27 when He says the disciple must be willing to leave family to follow Him. The disciples love for Christ becomes even greater than love for his family.

Writer Michael Haykin says, "Not to love him and to be devoted him without reservation is to dishonour God and to grieve the Spirit in his Christ-centred ministry."<sup>13</sup> The Apostle Paul implied love as natural for the disciples of Christ in Ephesians

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), 24.

6:24, "Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." The grace of God is evident and can be seen in a disciple who actively and sincerely loves Jesus.

### **Love for Jesus is Demonstrated in His Relationship to Christ.**

Following the Lord in *Believer's Baptism* is a natural extension of the disciple who believes the Gospel and loves the Lord. Michael Gorman observes the teachings of the Apostle Paul and makes a compelling case for the "Christian" refusing *Believer's Baptism* as not being a true disciple of Jesus. He says,

For Paul private belief and public confession of it—including baptism—go hand in hand. Both are needed for salvation. That is, conversion-initiation is both personal and public; faith brings a person into a relationship with God in Christ, and also with other believers. Baptism makes public and communal that which is first of all private and individual, but cannot remain so.<sup>14</sup>

Several passages come to mind considering the necessity of a Christian being immersed in water following conversion.

- Baptism demonstrates a person being "in" Christ as in - they are a Christian. Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

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<sup>14</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 123.

- Baptism illustrates a new life in Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).
- Jesus exemplifies baptism. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).
- Jesus commands baptism. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them..." (Matthew 28:19).
- Baptism conveys the spiritual act of baptism as authorized in the name of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

A Christian will follow the Lord in *Believer's Baptism*, making His personal faith in Christ public because he loves Jesus. Yes, the thief on the cross did not have the opportunity to be baptized, but when one is nailed to a cross, he does not have much of a choice! His example and others (because of unique circumstances) who cannot demonstrate their faith in baptism are the exception, not the rule. Most Christians devoted to the Lord and are genuine disciples will gladly identify with Christ in baptism, demonstrating their ongoing faith in the resurrected Lord and His finished work on the Cross, death, burial, and resurrection. They want others to know their faith is legitimate. They are not ashamed to be publicly baptized.

Loving Christ is also demonstrated in being obedient to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus repeatedly affirms this, including John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The Apostle John also declares, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). We can certainly demonstrate our love for the Lord in our obedient actions, our responsive attitude, and our respectful words to the Lord and others.

### **Love for Jesus is Demonstrated in Relationships with Others.**

Christians live in a community with other disciples. The local church is a gathering of more than like-minded individuals. The church is comprised of imperfect people who gather to worship the Lord, learn from His Word, praise with their lips, and serve the Lord their God. Faithfully gathering for worship services, enduring relationships with others, and looking forward to and enjoying them is part of the Christian life. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). Following the resurrection of Christ, the longest-living apostle was the Apostle John. He knew a lot about church life and how to demonstrate love to God by loving other people. With a pastoral tone, John declares in 1 John 4:11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The church gathered is a convergence of people, time, and places designated to worship the Lord publicly. In *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life*, Donald Whitney articulates, "To

worship God means to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy.<sup>15</sup> A mark of a disciple will include regular and faithful worship of the Lord with other Christians in the local church. It is with these other disciples that the Christian can carry out further disciplines and service. Adam McClendon and Jared Lockhart write, "God did not design a church gathering to be a place merely to receive; instead, he intended it to be a place of engagement, where each person would use his or her personality, gifts, and passions for the glory of God in meeting with the saints to publicly acknowledge Jesus as the Christ."<sup>16</sup> Worshipping Jesus is the goal of Sunday church gatherings.

### **Disciples Worship Jesus Because of Personal Self Denial.**

Denying self is a mark of the worshipful disciple, which is found in Mark 8, Luke 9, 14, and also Matthew 16:24-26, where Scripture says, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

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<sup>15</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life (Revised and Updated)* (NavPress, 2014), 103–104.

<sup>16</sup> P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 37–38.



Self-denial is an integral part of the Christian's progressive sanctification. Writer Michael Gorman states, "Sanctification—growth in holiness, or dedication to God—replaces 'greater and greater iniquity.' This growth is achieved, according to Paul, by means of regular self-offering to God. This is for believers, as it was for Christ, a dynamic and ongoing narrative posture before God."<sup>17</sup> Paul describes this self-denial possibility in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Because of the Cross, we can live for the Lord instead of ourselves. As the disciples bowed down to Jesus on that mountain in Matthew 28, they had already received three years of instruction about serving the Lord, serving others, and denying self. They would continue to worship and yield their lives to Him because Jesus is worthy of lives of worship. Denying self is necessary to enable and prepare for life with other disciples, which is the Second Mark of a Disciple: *Walking with Others*.

## **Mark 2: Walk With Others**

Making Disciples is the primary idea behind "teach" in verse 19. "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). For a person to become a disciple, they must first become a convert to Christ and learn to worship Jesus as their Saviour, the resurrected Son of God.

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<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 132.

The new converts are placing their complete faith and trust in Jesus to save them from their sin with an *ongoing belief* in the Gospel of Christ.

"Teach" is the same as the word "Disciple." Μαθητεύω as identified in the introduction as a "disciple, follower, or learner." Jesus is instructing His disciples to "Go, make disciples" in His first instruction, "Go and teach." These new believers are to follow the Lord in "Believer's Baptism" and to be taught the rest of the teachings of Jesus. The original disciples give detailed lessons per the robust teachings of Jesus as found in the Scriptures. Their stories, examples, and Scriptures written indicate their lives in relationship to others. Essentially, the original eleven and subsequent disciples are walking through life together.

### **The Christian life includes walking with other Christians.**

The Shema of Deuteronomy 6 is an insightful passage as to how the eleven disciples (Hebrews) understood teaching and "discipleship."

Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. <sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: <sup>5</sup> And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. <sup>6</sup> And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: <sup>7</sup> And thou shalt teach them

diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. <sup>8</sup> And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. <sup>9</sup> And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deuteronomy 6:3-9).

In addition to the public gathering of the saints on Sunday, it is healthy and helpful for the church to gather in more personal ways to live life together throughout the week. Living together while including God and others is advantageous to any Christian and any church. Fellowship and personal relationship is discipleship 101. Walking With Others, for the disciple of Jesus, includes several private and personal disciplines. The first-century church demonstrated this small group, or house-to-house model of ministry in their discipleship program as described in Acts 2:26, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Walking through life with others adds several spiritual and personal benefits. These "disciplines" are mostly learned and matured in small groups.

### **Talk about the Scriptures.**

The Shema indicates a relational way of communicating and sharing Bible truth in everyday life. Notice the verbs "Sitting, walking, laying down, rising." These are daily habits and activities. Bible truth can be discussed and applied in everyday life and

situational settings. In addition to the public worship service, Christians can encourage others and be encouraged in relational ways. Small groups, such as *Scatter Groups*, *Sunday Schools*, and *Life Groups*, can actively offer Bible teaching, further training, and practical accountability in a relational setting.

### **Small Group Bible Instruction.**

Jesus not only preached to large crowds of hundreds and thousands but also encountered and instructed his disciples in small groups in more relational and personal ways. The larger meetings are evangelistic while the small groups are discipleship.

- Matthew 11:1 demonstrates, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities."
- Mark 4:34, reports, "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."

As Jesus was the Word made flesh, when He spoke to the disciples, He heard the very Words of God from Himself! Today, we are privileged to read and study the written Word of God, the Bible. In the Scriptures, we have the very words of God as well. Instilling the Bible into our thoughts and minds can significantly impact our decisions and actions. Commentator John Phillips suggests having God's word abide in us. He declares,

To have Christ's words "abiding" in us means more than merely memorizing them. It means meditating on them

until our conscious natures are impregnated with them, until they become a vital part of us, so that they enlighten our understanding, enthuse our emotions, energize our wills.<sup>18</sup>

SCATTER GROUPS OF WILTON BAPTIST CHURCH ARE INTERGENERATIONAL AND RELATIONAL TO ENCOURAGE AND FOSTER SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN ALL AGES. CHILDREN AND TEENS PARTICIPATE AND WITNESS THEIR PARENTS SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND INTERACTION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. SCATTER HOSTS AND SCATTER LEADERS PLAY A CRITICAL PART IN HEALTHY DISCUSSION AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

## **Study the Bible.**

Bible study should be conducted in small groups, in families, and by individuals. 2 Timothy 2:15 instructs, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Personal Bible study ensures one is able to contribute when in a small group setting. There is a difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible. Donald Whitney offers several helpful suggestions for Bible study, including the following:

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<sup>18</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Jn 15:7–8.

The basic difference between Bible reading and Bible study is simply a pen and paper (or some other means of preserving your thoughts). Write down observations about the text as you read, and record questions that come to your mind. If your Bible has cross-references, look up the ones that relate to the verses that prompt your questions, then record your insights. Find a key word in your reading and use the concordance found in the back of most Bibles to review the other references that use the word, and again note your findings. Another way to begin is to outline a chapter, one paragraph at a time. When you finish that chapter, move on to the next until you've outlined the entire book. Before long you'll have a far stronger grasp on a section of Scripture than you had by just reading it.<sup>19</sup>

### **Continue in the Scriptures.**

Daily Bible intake assists in spiritual formation and growth, like eating several meals daily. There will be spiritual challenges to enjoying these spiritual meals. Michael Haykin observed, "A state of war thus marks the relationship between the flesh and the Holy Spirit. It is a war in which there is no neutral ground."<sup>20</sup> We need nourishment and spiritual strength; the Bible offers this to us. There are temptations to drift away from the Lord and His word. Still, by God's grace, the disciple can continue. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

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<sup>19</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life (Revised and Updated)* (NavPress, 2014), 32–33.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), 17.

encourages, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Not only does Bible intake grow a disciple, it also indicates one's faith in the Gospel and evidence that one is a disciple. Jesus says as much in John 8:31-32, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." An incredible benefit to knowing the Scriptures is that they, as truth, will set us free—purpose to continue in the word.

### **Talk to God.**

Prayer is a private discipline in addition to being a public practice. Prayer occurs in the life of a disciple by himself, with his family, or with his small group. In the book, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality*, Michal Haykins tells of John Bunyan and the discipline required actually to spend time with God in prayer:

From personal experience Bunyan knew the allergic reaction of the sinful nature to the presence of God that still resides in the bosom of every believer. Instead of coming into God's radiant presence to pray, it wants to run and

hide—like Adam after he had sinned in the garden. In other words, prayer demands discipline and hard work.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus practiced personal and public prayers. Following the ministry of Jesus, Matthew 9:35-38 shares,

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Before demonstrating the "Model Prayer" or "Lord's Prayer," Luke 11:1 gives a glimpse of the prayer life of Jesus, "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." They wanted to pray as Jesus prayed. He is the best example of fellowship and praying to the Father. Speaking of Luke 11, Douglas Mangum, in the *Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament*, comments:

Within the larger section dealing with discipleship, one cannot forget that Jesus' disciples must have a vibrant

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), 59.



prayer life. Jesus teaches his disciples about the pattern of prayer and then gives them three pictures of prayer. First, the model prayer demonstrates the pattern his disciples are to employ in prayer (11:1–4). Then he provides his three classic pictures of prayer: a friend asking for bread at midnight (11:5–8), a person knocking on a door (11:9–10), and a child asking for something from his father (11:11–13). These provide principles for how to pray and implicit promises about how God will respond to persistent prayer from his children.<sup>22</sup>

### **Mutual Accountability and Encouragement.**

Being with other Christians and sharing life have many spiritual benefits. In the book *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts*, Adam McClendon describes a journey to a hospital requiring a long road trip in which he took another brother in Christ. As they traveled in his car, Adam noticed that having another man with him encouraged him and kept him accountable for doing good. He said,

A brother in the Lord Jesus Christ was with me. A member of the church was keeping me accountable by simply being there. His presence helped curb temptation. Why is this the case? It is because one of the major benefits of meeting

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas Mangum, ed., *Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament*, Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Lk 11:1–13.

together continually is this: Christian community restrains sin!<sup>23</sup>

When one knows the Bible more and prays more often with others it is easier to confront, challenge, and encourage others, when needed. Disciples of Christ begin their discipleship journey with the mark of *Worshipping God* and continue spiritual formation and development while *Walking with Others*. There are two more marks to examine. Next is *Winning to Jesus*.

### **Mark 3: Win to Jesus**

Winning others to Jesus include several ministry and service focuses. Proverbs 11:30 indicates, “The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; And he that winneth souls *is* wise.” A wise disciple of Christ is actively making other disciples. The path of discipleship culminates in the life of the Christian with sharing his faith and then assisting in the spiritual formation of another, younger disciple of Christ. The worship, walk, and win is circular and ongoing. The Christian who is winning people to Jesus, making new converts, starts the new disciple in the “worship” and “walk” marks of the disciple. The following focuses will assist in winning others to Jesus.

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<sup>23</sup> Adam P. McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 46.

## Win in Service.

Disciples serve the Lord when they serve other people. Matthew illustrates this focus at the feeding of the 5000.

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children (Matthew 15:33-36).

The disciple of Jesus is winning in the Christian life and winning others to the Lord with their selfless service. Peter declares our service is connected to God's grace. "As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:9-10). Paul also stated, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13). This writer believes every Christian should find at least one ministry to serve in within his church and do it to the best of his ability.

Discerning and deploying one's spiritual gift in church ministry is essential to serve the Lord effectively. At the moment of salvation, the follower of Jesus is gifted with a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. It is essential to utilize this spiritual gift in active ministry and service. Commenting on 1 Peter 4:10, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* states, "Believers should be diligent in using their spiritual gifts. Each gift (*charisma*) is to be used to serve (*diakonountes*; cf. *diakonos*, "deacon") or "minister to" others."<sup>24</sup> It has been said, "Lead in your strengths." Indeed, a disciple can serve with what they are strong in, in what they have been gifted in. Scriptural lists of spiritual gifts can be found in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. The spiritual gift can assist you in winning others to Christ with your service to Him. Ultimately the Lord wins the person to Jesus, but He may utilize your testimony, faithfulness, and service.

### **Win with Humility.**

Christian service must be conducted with humility. Luke 22:24-26 gives us a picture of humble service. "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...But ye *shall not be* so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he

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<sup>24</sup> Roger M. Raymer, "1 Peter," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 853.

that doth serve.” Andrew Murray makes three helpful observations about humility in the life of the disciple seeking to serve the Lord.

1. First, *How much there may be of earnest and active religion while humility is still sadly wanting.*
2. Second, *How impotent all external teaching and all personal effort is, to conquer pride or give the meek and lowly heart.*
3. Third, *It is only by the indwelling of Christ in His divine humility that we become truly humble.*<sup>25</sup>

At the right time, the Lord lifts and exalts those who serve humbly. Much Christian work may be conducted “behind the scenes” without applause or public recognition. That’s ok. God sees our humble service. Peter describes this promise to those who serve with selfless humility in 1 Peter 5:5-6, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” Let God exalt you. Live and serve with humility.

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness* (New York; London; Glasgow: Fleming H. Revell, 1800), 41.

## Mark 4: Rest in Jesus

The results of *Worshipping God*, *Walking with Others*, and *Winning to Jesus* are evident now and later. The faithful disciple has several promises of Scripture that he can trust the Lord for. As Jesus shares this ministry model and pattern of discipleship, He makes a promise to them. “I am with you” (Mathew 28:20). What an incredible promise! His presence brings tremendous comfort, peace, and rest to the faithful disciple. Here are just a few benefits of *Resting in Jesus*.

### Rest in His Call.

There will be trials, temptations, and much trouble in life. The first disciples each encountered tremendous challenges, but Jesus was with them through each challenge. The disciples could follow the example of Christ that they were privileged to see firsthand. The example of Christ demonstrates how to handle pain and suffering and how His steps are the best to follow as they provide peace and rest. Following the steps of Jesus is a calling that is much better than attempting to create our own path in life. Peter declares in 1 Peter 2:20-25,

For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when

he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

This example of Jesus is reproduced in the life of a faithful disciple. The disciple is called to be and becomes a discipler. Commentator Roger Raymer in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* speaks to this calling,

Christians are called (*eklēthēte*; cf. 1:15; 2:9) to follow Christ, to emulate His character and conduct, because He suffered for them. The word rendered an example (*hypogrammon*, lit., “underwriting”), appearing only here in the New Testament, refers to a writing or drawing that a student reproduces.”<sup>26</sup>

Committing ourselves to God, even in trials and troubles, is the complete circle of a life of faith. Not only does the disciple trust the Lord in good times, but also in bad times. Even when troubles come, the disciple can rest in the Lord, Who “judgeth righteously.” The “Bishop of our souls” is available to guide us in the right paths. The Christian writes a letter or paints a picture of God’s grace while following the example of Jesus. While the

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<sup>26</sup> Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 848.

course may be challenging, the Christian follows the model and pattern of Jesus while believing His way is best.<sup>27</sup> The Christian need not “stray” from the path God has established for him to follow. The disciple of Jesus will seek the path of Jesus and consistently follow “in His steps.”

### **Rest in His Voice.**

Comforting is the voice of the Lord. As described earlier in this paper, the public and private disciplines of Bible study and prayer significantly contribute to finding rest and peace in our lives. The Word of God speaks grace and peace into our very souls. The Gospel of John records a comforting promise,

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand. I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

### **Rest More, Worry Less.**

In Luke 12:22-23, Jesus speaks directly to His disciples, and His disciples today apply this same teaching; Worry less because He will give us all we truly need, “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life,

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<sup>27</sup> Psalm 18:30, *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: The word of the LORD is tried: He *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.



what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment.” Later on in this same teaching scene, Jesus instructs, “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke 12:31).

In this same line of reason, Matthew 11:28-30 records, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” The disciple of Christ who comes to the Lord can commit every aspect of his life to the Lord. The result is more rest and peace and less worry and strife.

## Conclusion

The marks of disciples of Christ are *Worship God, Walk with Others, Win to Jesus, and Rest in Him*. This is who they are, what they do, and who they are becoming; They are disciples who follow Jesus's teachings. The present-day Μαθητής (Disciple) must learn from and follow the διδάσκαλος (teacher), and these four marks of a disciple are a natural progression for spiritual formation and growth. Following this example of Scripture will strengthen any church and the disciples in it.

“Go,” Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. “Make disciples in My name,” He said. Near the end of John’s account of the life of Christ, John 20:21 relates, “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” We

are sent with the same authority in the name of Jesus, enjoy the peace of God with us, and may boldly proclaim the message of the Gospel while being disciples and making disciples.

## **PART 2**

# **Spiritual Formation Growth Plan**

### **Introduction**

Personal spiritual growth is an individual choice a disciple of Christ must make. The daily habits that contribute to abiding with and dwelling in the presence of the Lord are critical parts of healthy spiritual formation and growing in discipleship. The prophet Jeremiah was instructed to search all of Jerusalem for a man who was a legitimate disciple of the Lord. He could not find one. Many in the city claimed to be a follower of Yahweh, but none were authentic. Observe God's imperative to search for Jeremiah:

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely... I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they

have known the way of the LORD, *and* the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds (Jeremiah 5:1-2, 5).

## Where Are the Disciples?

Jeremiah went to the poor, the powerful, the religious, and the secular and could not find a genuine disciple. Outside of King Josiah, and a handful of priests, there were no legitimate disciples to be seen. The men in the “City of God”<sup>28</sup> were not praising or genuinely dwelling with the Lord. They lived selfishly instead of living for their God. Michael Haykins describes this selfish dilemma, “Self-centered spirituality is the prime characteristic of pagan culture, be it ancient or modern.”<sup>29</sup> Christians are disciples of Jesus and must live contrary to the modern pagan culture while embracing a life devoted to Christ. The center of the Christian’s life is Christ, not self (John 15:5). Where are the faithful followers of Jesus today? Personal discipleship disciplines are a choice that a Christian makes daily. When incorporated and properly applied, the *Marks of a Disciple* ensure spiritual progress during the Christian life.

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<sup>28</sup> Psalm 48:1, “Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.”

<sup>29</sup> Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), 11.

## Paul's Challenge to Timothy

Paul challenges Timothy to get out of the gym and exercise in spiritual matters in 1 Timothy 4:7-8. Here Paul describes personal godliness as a workout, an active choice that involves initiative and hard work. “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

### Spiritual Disciplines as a Means of Godliness

“Exercise” is where we find the word “gymnasium.” The word γυμνάζω (gymnazo) means to “exercise vigorously, in any way, either the body or the mind.”<sup>30</sup> 1 Timothy 4:7 speaks of “one who strives earnestly to become godly.”<sup>31</sup> Discipleship includes discipline; it even shares the same root word. Gymnasium activities in Paul’s day included the men in the gym stripping off all their clothes. The initial meaning of γυμνάζω is “to exercise naked.”<sup>32</sup> The reader may blush while reading but know that stripping down at your local gym is not recommended to the

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 122.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

disciple of Christ! Taking this idea into a spiritual understanding and application, the Christian strips down all the pretenses and focuses on fundamental spiritual exercises to arrive at healthy spirituality. Spiritual nakedness gives an individual self-awareness and a clear spiritual assessment of where he is and where he needs to move. The disciple can thank the Lord, He takes us just as we are, and in time and with purpose, He can conform us to the image of His Son.<sup>33</sup>

## **Spiritual Disciplines to Exercise and Practice**

### **Worship God:**

The consistent and faithful worship of God is a spiritual discipline every disciple must include. Worship is generally Sunday church with God's people gathered publicly and locally, though worship can also be daily, moment by moment. Describing the imperative of individual and collective worship of the Lord with God's people in the local church, Paul declared:

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,

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<sup>33</sup> Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

Faith is evident in the life of the Christian who not only attends but faithfully participates in the life of his church on Sundays. God is worthy of our time and attention. Giving Sunday mornings to the Lord demonstrates conviction and love for the Lord while affirming one's faith with prayers, Scripture, fellowship, and Bible preaching. Donald Whitney accurately describes what it is to worship, "To worship God means to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy."<sup>34</sup> This statement is an incredibly insightful and convicting thought that can cause a disciple to see the value and priority of Sunday worship of Jesus. Because a disciple is a believer, he demonstrates God's importance in his life by giving time to the Lord to gather with God's people to worship Him (John 4:23-24).

Gathering with the local church is critical for a genuine disciple of Jesus. It's a historical practice, and precedent in every generation since Christ - faithful Christians gather in His name. Adam McClendon and Jared Lockhart note the following church example about disciples gathering.

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<sup>34</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life (Revised and Updated)* (NavPress, 2014), 103–104.

The original meaning for the word church involved a gathering (an assembly) of people. While the word itself should be sufficient to demonstrate the necessity for the people of God to gather regularly, God graciously gave us example after example throughout the New Testament not only to describe the early church's activity but also to serve as a model for believers so we could know and follow God's design for us today.<sup>35</sup>

### **Walk with Others:**

Living life together with others offers encouragement and accountability. Small groups, Scatter Groups, and other aptly named groups can assist the disciple in healthy spiritual formation and personal discipleship. After preaching to large audiences of hundreds and sometimes thousands of people, Jesus would take His immediate disciples aside in a small group setting and teach them personally. Andrew Murray summarizes, "For three years the disciples had been in the training school of Jesus."<sup>36</sup> This setting is more relational and personal. It's living life together. God created us for community and fellowship.<sup>37</sup> Knowing and being known is

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<sup>35</sup> P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 34.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness* (New York; London; Glasgow: Fleming H. Revell, 1800), 39.

<sup>37</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." Acts 2:42, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

part of our DNA. We need Christian friendships. Speaking of friendship as part of the Christian life, Michael Haykins proposes,

Now, the Bible uses two consistent images in its representation of friendship. The first is that of *the knitting of souls together...* Not surprisingly, the term ‘friend’ naturally became another name for believers or brothers and sisters in the Lord (see 3 John 14)...The second image that the Bible uses to represent friendship is *the face-to-face encounter*.<sup>38</sup>

Disciples need others for accountability. Other than the Lord, who will challenge us when we are wrong? Who will correct us with love? Paul and Timothy and Jonathan and David are just a few of many other Biblical examples of disciples who enjoyed the benefits of walking in life with others. Teaching, learning, togetherness, unity of purpose, and relationships are all part of this mark of the disciple. We have brothers and sisters in Christ as part of this “Family of God.”<sup>39</sup> The same ones who hold us accountable, we can hold accountable. The same ones are also sources of encouragement. We, too, can encourage others. The Apostle Paul shares the following about how Christians edify one another with love in Ephesians 4:16, “From whom the whole body

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), 73.

<sup>39</sup> The family of Christians, named for Christ, is described in Ephesians 3:14-15, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”



fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

### **Win to Jesus:**

The discipleship process must start with someone. From Jesus to His immediate disciples and the subsequent disciples up until this day, someone has shared the Gospel, planted the seed, watered the seed, or harvested a soul to the Lord. This new convert is a disciple of Jesus, a new Christian. Each person investing truth into that person is serving the Lord and others. Humble service is how a disciple can win people to Jesus. The spiritual gift imparted to the new believer can be discovered and utilized in Gospel ministry upon salvation. Every Christian must find a way to serve within the context of his local church. Service is how we win people to Jesus and fulfill *The Great Commission* imperative of Matthew 28:19, “Go.”

The great missionary, the Apostle Paul, is an excellent example of serving the Lord and serving others. His love and devotion to Jesus and His Gospel is evident. Michael Gorman writes, “That Paul suffered is well known; that he did so, at least

from his perspective, out of love, is not always recognized.”<sup>40</sup> Why did Paul serve, even to the point of suffering? He loved the Lord, as Deuteronomy 6 instructs, and He loved people, like the Second Commandment<sup>41</sup> states, to share the Gospel with them, to serve them.

Love is the greatest motivation we have in serving the Lord and others. Love is more than words; it’s action. Love is commanded by God and commended throughout Scripture. Notice how charity (love) affects a disciple’s service.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

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<sup>40</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 179.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 22:38-39, “This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

## **Rest in Jesus:**

The Christian life is not all work. Jesus completed the work of salvation on the cross, and we can rest in Him, knowing His presence in our lives. Jesus says it best when He invites those seeking peace to come to Him in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

Disciples living with faithful worship, walking with others through life, and winning others to Jesus with their loving service can enjoy the rest and peace abiding with Christ affords. The disciple who realizes the daily presence of the Lord can discover the joy of serving Jesus and living a life dedicated to Him as the center of this Christian life.

## **Assessment Results**

The *Marks of a Disciple Spiritual Assessment* I developed was administered to a small sampling of nine Christian people. The education levels of these nine include four college graduates, two with some college, one having trade schooling, and the rest are High School graduates. All nine’s ethnicity is white. Four live in a city environment, and the rest live in the countryside. The average age is 35, with the youngest being 23 and the oldest being 70.

There are three churches represented in this sampling. The following group results demonstrate areas that are strong and areas that could use improvement for these disciples.

- **Worship God** (out of 30 possible points): **26.5**
- **Walk With Others** (out of 30 possible points): **22.6**
- **Win to Jesus** (out of 30 possible points): **24.4**
- **Rest in Jesus** (out of 30 possible points): **26.8**

**Total Discipleship Assessment** (out of 120 possible points): **100.3**

There is no right or wrong answer to the assessment questions. This assessment is merely a tool used to assist a disciple in honestly evaluating where he is in his walk with Christ. To gauge the present condition of the disciples in this assessment, I factored that four of the six questions must be marked “5” for a higher, more excellent score. Subtracting units of four from the highest possible score is how the following numbers were derived. An honest personal spiritual assessment with scores falling into the number windows below may be found.

Individual Mark Scoring:

- 27-30, Excellent, keep going!
- 23-26, Good, don’t stop!
- 19-22, Room to Grow.
- 0-18, Ask for Help.

Overall Scoring:

- 108-120, Excellent, keep going!
- 92-107, Good, don’t stop!

- 91-76, Room to Grow.
- 0-76, Ask for Help.

From the *Marks of a Disciple Spiritual Assessment*, “Walk with Others” was the lowest score. “Walking with Others” is a weak area of discipleship for this group. “Resting in Jesus” was the

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT FOR YOURSELF. IT IS LOCATED AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOK. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. THE ASSESSMENT IS A TOOL TO ASSIST YOU IN DETERMINING HOW YOU ARE DOING WITH THE “MARKS OF A DISCIPLE.”

highest. This writer initially thought that “Worshipping God” would have been the highest mark but found it enlightening and encouraging that “Resting in Jesus” is the highest. These disciples rely on the Lord and enjoy Jesus's presence.

### **Customized Growth Plan**

Following Spiritual Disciplines, as advised in the following *Growth Plan*, will contribute to the overall spiritual health of a disciple of Christ. These are a means to an end, not the end itself. The result of discipleship is becoming more like Jesus; this is the goal. This growth plan will assist in godliness and discipleship while primarily focusing on the spiritual disciplines contributing to effective “Walking with Others.”

## **Worship God:**

Continue to attend church services each Sunday, being faithful to participate in the activity of your local church. Let your personal daily worship overflow into a public gathering. Worship the Lord with your heart, soul, body, and mind. Bow down before Him in public prayer. Praise Him in worshipful and doctrinally sound singing. Gather in person and participate with your local congregation each Sunday.

## **Walk with Others:**

1. Talk Bible with Others.
  - Participate in the small groups offered in your church. Don't just attend; participate in the discussion. Become a meaningful contributor.
  - After reading the Bible personally, talk with another Christian friend about the passage. Plan for a friendly Bible discussion once a week.
  - Send a text with a Bible verse that encouraged you today.
  - Listen to a podcast such as "Love Worth Finding" with Adrian Rogers, "Everyday Truth" with Kurt Skelly, "Family Talk" with James Dobson, "Thru the Bible" with J. Vernon McGee, or "Truth for Life" with Alistair Begg and share it with a friend. Share one podcast each month.

- Ask another disciple to participate in a Bible reading challenge with you and keep each other accountable. This could be a chapter of Proverbs each day, the New Testament in the year, the whole Bible in a year, or the whole Bible in 3 months plan.
  - Read books such as “Living By the Book” by Howard and William Hendricks, “Women of the Word” by Jen Wilken, “Jesus on Every Page” by David Murray, “The Calvary Road” by Roy Hession, or “Running With Giants” by John Maxwell and discuss the Bible truths you learned with others.
2. Talk To God with Others.
- Pray with your small group.
  - Share your prayer requests with the group.
  - Ask prayer requests on behalf of others.
  - Offer to lead the group in prayer.
  - Text a friend you are praying and pause to pray for them.
  - Offer to pray for a person in distress or facing a tough challenge and then pray with him at that moment.
  - Keep a prayer list with the requests of many others listed. “The Battle Plan Prayer Journal” by Alex Kendrick is a good resource for your prayer list.
  - Read a book such as, “Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire” by Jim Cymbala, “Partners in Prayer” by John Maxwell, “Praying for Your Elephant” by Adam Stadtmiller, “The Prayer of Jabez” by Bruce

Wilkerson, or “The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies” by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick and then plan a specific time each day to pray personally, to prepare yourself better to pray in the small group.

3. Share Life with Others.

- Become more relational with other Christians.
- Include other disciples in your daily life.
- Speak encouraging words: Purpose to say something positive to at least one Christian daily.
- Lovingly speak the truth. A brother or sister in Christ may need a gentle reminder to do the right thing or to think the right way.
- Be an example. Positive proximity demonstrates words and actions that may encourage, challenge, or compel another disciple to take the correct next step.

### **Win to Jesus:**

Discover your spiritual gift and sign up for at least one ministry in the context of your local church. You need your church, and your church needs you to reach more folks for Christ with the Gospel and to adequately disciple the new converts. The greeting team, cleaning crew, kid’s ministry, VBS, AWANA, nursery, music ministry, *Scatter Group* host, media ministry, grounds crew, and safety team are good places to start. Ask your pastor this Sunday about ministries in which you can volunteer. Disciples can win others to Jesus with their service.



In addition to serving, find creative ways to invite others to Christ. Invite people to attend Sunday church with you. Ask a neighbor to attend the next outreach event at your church. Take a dessert to a neighbor who recently lost a loved one and ask them if you could pray with them.

### **Rest in Jesus:**

Jesus did the work of salvation at the Cross. Jesus is with us while we work to share His message with the lost. Jesus is with us when we baptize new disciples and teach the Bible. Rest upon Him. Walk in the Spirit. Rely on Christ. Commit all the results and expectations to the Lord. Let Him build His church as He promised He would in Matthew 16:18.

### **Conclusion**

This *Personal Spiritual Growth Plan* will only help an earnest disciple when utilized. Decisions are good to make, but with no action, nothing will change, and nothing will be better. Choose to grow. Instill these disciplines into your life. While Jeremiah could not find a disciple, the Lord saw a faithful disciple in Jeremiah. Be like Jeremiah.

From the example of Paul telling Timothy to “get out of the gym,” we uncover the truth that the Christian life requires spiritual

exercise, and this spiritual exercise is much more valuable than the sweat of a physical workout in the gym. Like physical exercise, spiritual exercise takes decision, time, place, and effort. Marathon runners will adjust their schedule for race day. Basketball players will design their calendars around the big game. Disciples of Christ examine their priorities and will implement the necessary changes to become more like Jesus.

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## Marks of a Disciple: Spiritual Assessment by Steve Harness

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR ASSESSMENT/SCORE:** This self-assessment indicates your honest evaluation. There are no right or wrong answers; this is a personal evaluation of how things are for you today. The assessment and the score below reveal some areas in which, as a disciple, you are strong or some areas in which you can ask the Lord to help you grow. The higher the total number, the stronger this particular mark is for you. Lower numbers indicate areas to examine and plan to change. Be encouraged to continue as a disciple of Christ who is consistently performing self-evaluation and choosing to make distinct strides in following Jesus.

### Mark of a Disciple #1: WORSHIP GOD

Please indicate a spiritual self-assessment of 1-5 with 5 being the most accurate and 1 being the least accurate.	5	4	3	2	1
<i>I identify as a Christian, a born-again disciple of Jesus.</i>					
<i>My love, devotion, and passion for Jesus is strong.</i>					
<i>I have publicly followed the Lord in Believer's Baptism.</i>					
<i>I have consistent interaction with fellow disciples each Sunday morning.</i>					
<i>I look forward to Sunday morning Worship of the Lord with my church.</i>					
<i>I practice self-denial and see myself as crucified with Christ daily.</i>					

Total score possible: 30 My WORSHIP GOD, Score: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark of a Disciple #2: WALK WITH OTHERS

Please indicate a spiritual self-assessment of 1-5 with 5 being the most accurate and 1 being the least accurate.	5	4	3	2	1
<i>I participate faithfully in small group meetings offered by my church family.</i>					
<i>I talk Bible with other Christians throughout the week.</i>					
<i>I have personal times of Bible study daily.</i>					
<i>I pray with other Christians often.</i>					
<i>I pray to the Lord several times a day.</i>					
<i>My Christian friends are comfortable enough with me to challenge me and hold me accountable for doing right.</i>					

Total score possible: 30 My WALK WITH OTHERS, Score: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark of a Disciple #3: WIN TO JESUS

Please indicate a spiritual self-assessment of 1-5 with 5 being most accurate and 1 being least accurate.	5	4	3	2	1
<i>I consider winning people to Jesus a wise thing to do.</i>					
<i>I know what my Spiritual Gift is.</i>					
<i>I have one ministry that I serve in the context of my church.</i>					
<i>I have relational peace serving alongside others.</i>					
<i>I have attempted to share the Gospel with at least one person in the last 40 days.</i>					
<i>I am not concerned about public praise from others.</i>					

Total score possible: 30 My WIN TO JESUS, Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark of a Disciple #4: REST IN JESUS

Please indicate a spiritual self-assessment of 1-5, with 5 being the most accurate and 1 being the least accurate.	5	4	3	2	1
<i>The presence of Jesus affects my outlook.</i>					
<i>I have learned to trust the Lord even when the path of life involves difficulty and pain.</i>					
<i>I know I have found God's will for my life and am living in His will presently.</i>					
<i>I discover peace and joy in Bible study and prayer.</i>					
<i>I have less stress and worry when praying and committing my problems to the Lord.</i>					
<i>I practice committing my will to the Lord daily.</i>					

Total score possible: 30 My REST IN JESUS, Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

### Discipleship Self-Assessment Totals

Add up your totals here.	
<i>Worship God, Total</i>	
<i>Walk with Others, Total</i>	
<i>Win to Jesus, Total</i>	
<i>Rest in Jesus, Total</i>	
<i>My Discipleship Assessment, Total</i>	

Total score possible: 120

My MARKS OF A DISCIPLE ASSESSMENT, Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Assessment Analysis:**

### **Individual Mark Scoring:**

- 27-30, Excellent, keep going!
- 23-26, Good, don't stop!
- 19-22, Room to Grow.
- 0-18, Ask for Help.

### **Overall Scoring:**

- 108-120, Excellent, keep going!
- 92-107, Good, don't stop!
- 91-76, Room to Grow.
- 0-76, Ask for Help.



**Personalize the *Spiritual Formation Growth Plan* tailoring it to your life.** Make a list of personal spiritual exercises that will help you grow in your relationship with the Lord. *Exercise is not the goal; being more like Jesus is the goal.*





\$5.00