

Topic 5: A Disciple Learns: The Bible Guides Us

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” ² Timothy 3:16-17

The goal of a disciple of Christ is to become Christ-like.

A Definition of Christian *Disciple*: A Christian disciple is a person who follows Jesus—to *know* Jesus and his teaching; to *grow* more like Jesus; and to *go* for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples.

We get our English word “disciple” from the Latin word *discipulus*, which means “pupil.” This corresponds to the New Testament noun *mathētēs* (from a Greek verb that means “to learn”). In short, the most basic and literal meaning of “disciple” is “student.” *A disciple is first and foremost a learner.*

In the time of Christ if you wanted to know what your teacher was thinking and saying, you had to tag along behind him.

The gospels show the first disciples following Jesus—

to *know* Jesus and his teaching,



HEAD

to *grow* more like Jesus and



HEART

to *go* for Jesus.



HAND

Two thousand years later, that’s still a good definition of discipleship. So discipleship involves *knowing*, *growing*, and *going*. We can compare these three areas of discipleship to the head, heart, and hands of a disciple. The idea of “Knowing” is symbolized by the head, while “growing” is symbolized by the heart, and finally, “going” is symbolized by hands. These categories bleed over into, build upon, and depend on each other.

Looking At the Text

1. Consider these passages from the gospels. They all show Jesus helping his followers grasp God's eternal truths. He did this largely through teaching:

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them” (Matthew 5:1-2).

“Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me’” (John 7:16).

After an extended time of teaching in the Upper Room the night before his death (see John 13-16), Jesus looked toward heaven and prayed *to* his Father *for* his disciples, “Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth” (John 17:17, nlt).

What did Jesus want his disciples to know about his teaching? From whom did it come?

Jesus taught his followers God's Word. Why? Because the ancient Scriptures are a revelation of God. They reveal:

- ◆ what God is like (Isaiah 46:8-10)
- ◆ why the world is broken (Genesis 3)
- ◆ how we can know God personally (Acts 17:27, 1 John 4:10)
- ◆ how broken people like us can find wholeness and enjoy lives full of significance and purpose (John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- ◆
- ◆ power against sin (Ps. 119 vss. 3, 11, 101, 165)
- ◆ freedom (Ps. 119 v. 45)
- ◆ direction and guidance (Ps. 119 vss. 105 and 130)
- ◆ stability (Ps. 119 v. 89)
- ◆ peace (Ps. 119 v. 165)
- ◆ hope (Ps. 119 vss. 114 and 147)

2. Check out what the gospel writer Mark says about Christ’s way of teaching his followers:

“[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach” (Mark 1:21).

“Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them” (Mark 2:13).

“He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables” (Mark 4:2, nlt).

“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near” (Jesus, speaking in Mark 13:28, nlt).

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jesus, speaking in Matthew 11:29).

What do these passages say about the way Jesus taught?

- ◆ What do these passages say to you about the way you teach as a parent, friend or spouse?
- ◆ As the master teacher, Jesus understood that people learn in different ways. For these reasons, Jesus taught in a variety of ways:

Publicly (Luke 21:37) and privately (Luke 10:38–39)

Through lectures (Matthew 5–7)

Telling stories (Luke 15)

Turning common, life experiences into teachable moments (Matthew 15:32–38; Luke 21:2–3; John 4)

Using object lessons (Matthew 18:2)

Using examples from history (Matthew 12:40; Luke 13:4).

After his crucifixion and resurrection and just before his return to heaven, Jesus, the master teacher, gathered his “students” and told them to go and make disciples of all the nations. The taught ones were to become teachers themselves.

That’s precisely what they did! This first generation of disciples began to pass on the things they had learned from Jesus. In Acts 2, we read that all the believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (v. 42). That’s still the pattern. We learn . . . then we share what we’ve learned with others (2 Timothy 2:2).

3. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, our memory verses for this lesson, we see how and why knowing God’s Word is so important. Reread this passage. What sticks out to you in these verses?



Discipleship is the pursuit of
wholelife *transformation*,
not just biblical or theological *information*.