

What is a Christian Disciple and Discipleship?

Christian Discipleship

Christian discipleship is a concept that was born when Jesus Christ hand-selected His first followers. A disciple, by definition, is a convinced adherent of a school or individual. In the case of Jesus, His disciples were those who followed Him while He was on earth, as well as those who continue to follow Him and His teachings today.

A Christian Disciple

As a disciple of Jesus we follow and obey His teachings. When we are His disciple we speak, act, and serve as He did. Through the love and compassion for others a disciple desires to see all unbelievers reconcile to Him through faith in Him, Jesus.

The First Twelve Disciples

Christian discipleship began, according to John's Gospel, the day after Jesus was baptized (John 1:35-39). According to this passage, the first two men to follow Him heard John the Baptist declare that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Andrew and his friend (most likely John) believed what they heard and followed Jesus. Before long, they were telling others about this amazing Man of God!

Andrew recruited his brother Simon (whom Jesus called Peter); the next day Jesus found Philip in Galilee; Philip found Nathaniel and soon a movement was born. Not everyone came easily or willingly at first. However, before long, Jesus had twelve disciples. Why only twelve? We don't really know that answer, but twelve has become a symbolic number of completion in Scripture. From Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel, so it's possible this number was intended to represent each tribe.

Fulfilling the Great Commission

Christian discipleship is summed up in the Great Commission. After the resurrection and before He ascended into heaven, Jesus appeared one last time to His disciples (they were eleven in number at that time, since Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus and hanged himself). This is the moment that He delivered the famous calling for disciples known as The Great Commission:



The Great Commission

**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18b-20)**

Christian discipleship continued to grow when the followers of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem and Peter outlined criteria for selecting a twelfth disciple to replace Judas Iscariot. The Scripture says they drew lots and the lot fell to Matthias. These men, who had previously been disciples, or followers of Jesus, were now to become apostles, or messengers. Their intention was to spread the Word, and beginning with Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and indwelt them for the first time, they did! (See Acts 1 and 2)

The Transformation Process

Christian discipleship is more than being a believer - it's about being a follower! Once we make a decision for Christ, then just like Andrew, John and Peter, we must become His disciples and follow Him. Have you chosen to follow Christ? If so, then you are a modern-day Christian disciple! "But I can't learn personally from Jesus like they did!" you might say. Oh, but you can!

Thanks to the faithfulness of those apostles, who clearly understood their role as messengers of Christ, we have their gospels and letters to go by. Later, when Paul was added to their number (by virtue of his Road to Damascus encounter with the risen Christ), he wrote letters to all the churches he helped create. These books and letters became the New Testament of God's Word, and unlike those first disciples, we have all of Christ's instructions at our fingertips!

Christian Discipleship

The Short Course in a Long Journey

Christian discipleship begins when you make an active choice to get to know Jesus better. By God's grace, it is then accomplished in several ways:

- ◆ You can study His Word daily and spend time alone with Him in prayer.
- ◆ You can become a member of a Bible-teaching church fellowship.
- ◆ You can seek out the companionship of other Christians who are growing with Christ.
- ◆ You can participate in ministry and meet the needs of other believers.
- ◆ You can share what you're learning about Christ with others, just like Andrew, James, John, Luke, Matthew, Peter, Paul and all the original disciples did.

Just like those first twelve, you too can be a believer who becomes a follower and messenger!