



What Is **DISCIPLESHIP**
and Why Should I Care?

A 5-day devotional plan based on content from resources
inspired by themes of the feature film **THE FORGE**

INTRODUCTION

After his resurrection and before he returned to heaven, Jesus gave his followers specific instructions in the Great Commission. He told them to make disciples of all nations. But what is discipleship? How do you become a disciple or disciple someone else? Discipling others requires prayer, humility, and dependence on God's leading. This five-day devotional walks you through the idea of discipleship, why it matters, and how to do it.

DAY #1: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Scripture:

Matthew 24:14

Matthew 28:18-20

A disciple is a devoted *follower*. A loyal *apprentice*. One who intentionally follows closely behind and imitates their teacher, their rabbi. When their rabbi takes a step, his disciple takes a step into the footprint left behind. It's a step-in-step relationship. A disciple's feet should be covered with the dust of their rabbi's sandals.

Jesus perfectly modeled the teacher and rabbi role for His disciples. He didn't just invite them to follow His words. His invitation was, "Come, follow Me." *Walk with Me. Follow what I say and what I do. Learn and grow as you step in My steps.*

Think about how this simple understanding of discipleship sheds light on the entire ministry of Jesus. Now His invitations make even more sense. What were the steps Jesus had taken that He was later asking His disciples to take?

First, as the Son of God in heaven, Jesus willingly laid down His eternal rights (Phil. 2:5–8), His divine glory (John 17:5), His beloved relationship with His Father (v. 23), and all His heavenly possessions (2 Cor. 8:9), so that He could obey His Father, come to earth, and lay down His life for us. He gave up everything to do the will of His Father. All out of faithful love for Him and us.

What did Jesus then invite His disciples to do? *The same.*

Near the end of His time with them, when He knew He had loved them to the end and was soon to return to His Father, Jesus humbly washed His disciples' feet, saying, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you" (John 13:14–15).

Then He shifted gears. Having cleaned His rabbi dust off their feet, He revealed something new to them. They could not take the next step with Him. "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later" (John 13:36). The one place they (and we) couldn't follow Him was in doing what He alone could do—to lay down His life as our substitute—to represent us in His role as high priest.

Yet He was still discipling these disciples. In His horrific suffering, Jesus showed how to glorify God even during seasons of great pain and persecution.

After His resurrection, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). They followed His example and went, imitating His ministry—lovingly preaching the gospel from city to city by the power of the Holy Spirit, praying in faith, baptizing believers, serving genuine needs, performing miracles, and teaching the Word of God.

During this five-day devotional, we'll explore Jesus' words of the Great Commission, what they mean for His followers, and how you can begin discipling others.

DAY #2: WHY DISCIPLESHIP?

Scripture:

John 20:21

Luke 24:46–49

Acts 1:7–8

1 Timothy 6:12–16

When someone comes to Christ, this is only the beginning! What a joy to see someone become a new person in Christ, right before our eyes! But it's important to recognize that any new believer is a spiritual infant, needing loving support and gentle attention from spiritual mothers and fathers and older brothers and sisters. Like our own children, they need protection, people who won't do anything to make them stumble (Rom. 14:21; Matt. 18:6). They need mature believers around them who can identify their needs and help them grow in the Word and in their walk with Christ. To grow into mature believers.

This is the end goal of discipleship.

Paul said he passionately proclaimed Christ and taught people about Christ with the goal of presenting them "mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). But what do mature believers actually look like?

For starters, they don't survive only on the spiritual milk that you and others feed them, but they're becoming able to feed themselves the spiritual meat of the Word (Heb. 5:12–14). They're not only getting a good handle on the truth of what they believe but are teaching others as well (Eph. 4:11–12).

They're growing in their discernment between good and evil (Rom. 12:9). Their mouths are not filled with foolish, toxic speech anymore but are instead becoming fountains of purity, encouragement, and blessing (Eph. 4:29). They're developing restraint and self-control (James 3:2), walking in unity instead of division (Eph. 4:13), and increasing in their capacity to love others (2 Pet. 1:5–8).

They're becoming "complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4), "equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Basically, they love Jesus, act like Jesus, and serve others like Jesus.

Those who are becoming mature in Christ are ALL-IN for Jesus!

And why shouldn't they be? Why shouldn't *any* of us be? Because Jesus is ALL-IN for us!

Hear it in His Great Commission: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20).

From all eternity, God the Father has been ALL-IN regarding His intentions. The Great Commission is the natural continuation of His wholehearted purposes, calling and equipping imperfect people to be wholeheartedly devoted to Him, both to experience for ourselves and then extend to others what knowing and following Jesus is all about.

DAY #3: DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS WITH HUMILITY

Scripture:

Matthew 28:19

Deuteronomy 6:4–7

Psalm 145:4–7

3 John 2–4

Do you doubt that God could greatly use you to make disciples? Don't be afraid. He prefers the underdog over the top dog. He often recruits the poor over the rich. The undignified over the amplified. The least and the last. The most underwhelming and unlikely of all (1 Cor. 1:26–31).

Why? Because they are more humble and more teachable. More grateful and willing to serve. More likely to give God the credit instead of basking in their own glory.

God chose fearful Gideon, washed-up Moses, little-brother David, and humble Mary. He picked the least likely woman in Samaria to evangelize her village (John 4:39–42), and He chose a once-naked, homeless, demon-possessed guy to take the gospel back to his hometown (Luke 8:38–39). Go figure.

The very last option to us may be God's very first choice. But He will always choose available disciples who are willing to obey His Great Commission. To make disciples.

The first part of making disciples is being a humble disciple yourself. You can't challenge people to be ALL-IN for Jesus if you're half-hearted and only half-interested in Him yourself. True disciple-making is more than having words to say but providing an example to follow. You don't need to be perfect. Nobody's perfect! But are you living with hidden sin? Are you resisting His Word? Are you not really convinced the gospel can change people's lives?

Before jumping into a teaching role, you may first need to ask someone to help disciple you. That's okay. There's so much to be gained by humbling yourself to learn under someone whose example can consistently keep pointing you to Jesus.

But when you're ready, the Lord will prompt you to become the one who mentors someone else, sharing rich conversations with them and teaching them to read and obey God's Word.

What an incredible honor it would be to walk with someone through their entire discipleship journey, all the way from the start, from the moment when God first cracked open the hardened soil of their hearts. Jesus did this. He stuck with His disciples until He knew they were ready to go make disciples themselves. Paul did it with Timothy.

But often, these discipleship relationships are just for a season. You're there for only a part of their journey. Maybe a year. Maybe a decade. Watering. Planting. Trusting God to give them (and you!) a time of real growth as you walk together (1 Cor. 3:7).

Just be praying specifically right now for God to place one or more people in your path that you can help take their next step. Ask God to make it clear as you pray.

DAY #4: PRAYING FOR A HARVEST

Scripture:

Matthew 9:37–38

1 Thessalonians 1:2–6

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrews 13:20–21

Jesus always looked into the eyes of people through an eternal lens. He not only saw their desperation as lost sheep but their priceless value in the eyes of God.

He valued them like a landowner values his fruitful fields almost ready for harvest, covered in beautiful, abundant crops, rapidly ripening on the vine. It's the heart's desire of every farmer—the rich reward from his and his workers' hard, hot hours of plowing, sowing, fertilizing, irrigating, waiting, preparing.

Harvest. A harvest worthy of the price paid to obtain it. When Jesus looked out on the abundant crowds, that's what He saw. Not rows of ripening grapes or grain, but precious souls, eternal souls, ready to be redeemed. Redeemed into eternal life, to be enjoyed forever, for the glory of the God who made them. Absolutely worth the hard sacrifice of the cross. And well worth the investment and careful attention of the workers.

The Bible says there is coming an ultimate “harvest time” when God, the righteous judge, will be seeking “fruit from the vineyard” (Luke 20:10). All heaven is preparing to collect this harvest. The souls of those whom Christ died to save. To redeem and rescue their lives so that none of them are wasted.

Yes, this harvest is abundant and ripening. “Open your eyes,” Jesus said to His disciples, “and look at the fields, because they are ready for harvest. The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together” (John 4:35–36).

But He also pointed out a problem: “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few” (Matt. 9:37). There weren't enough people waking up and showing up to work the fields. There were only these twelve men with Jesus at the moment. How could so few carry out so much?

“*Pray to the Lord of the harvest*” (Matt. 9:38). Before He told them to go, He told them to pray. See the needs, then fall on your knees. Because before you can reap a harvest, there must be a harvest. Lots of intentional preparation. The first step of spiritual soil preparation is the excellency of prayer!

Pray for the harvest. After praying for workers, start praying for each step of their work.

Pray for workers to train up workers. The task of reaching the world with the gospel is not up to us. That's God's job. “The Lord of the harvest,” will bring in His harvest. But we must be obedient, not only to be His workers, but to train up and prepare new workers. New disciples. God's plan is to reach the world, not through addition, but through multiplication. Not through converts alone, but through the explosive growth of faithful disciples who make disciples.

Pray for your own family, your parents, your siblings, your children, your grandchildren, maybe even a spouse who's hungry to grow spiritually but doesn't know how. Pray!

Then pray for Jesus to send out the workers. Imagine the Lord using you and your humble investment in one or two—in just a few—to change the world over the next generations.

DAY #5: SHARING THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWS

Scripture:

Mark 16:15

John 4:39–42

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

1 Thessalonians 2:8

One of the greatest joys of life is getting to share the best news in the world. The good news of the gospel of Jesus is infinitely more important than anything else we could talk about with anyone.

The Bible says to be “ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). Not to “quarrel,” but to be “gentle” and “patient” (2 Tim. 2:24). You can’t argue anyone into heaven. It’s ineffective and doesn’t work. Simply share the truth, trusting the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts.

Jesus modeled this beautifully. In John 4, during His encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well, He demonstrated how to engage someone respectfully in a difficult gospel conversation. This was someone of a different gender, nationality, background, and tradition. Jews and Samaritans were enemies, in fact. They didn’t interact. And yet Jesus initiated a conversation with her.

Surprised by His audacity, the woman at first became defensive. She repeatedly gave Him reasons why she was not open to Him or His message. But her resistance didn’t bother Jesus. He remained very patient. Gently persistent. He knew she needed the gospel much more than she needed the water she was drawing from the well. So He masterfully connected her felt need with her deeper need. He drew her in with sincere compassion and kindness.

Though she remained guarded, He gently exposed her hidden sin and then offered her the hope of the gospel through Him. The Holy Spirit was at work. By the end of their meeting, she had completely changed her mind about Jesus and was excited to share with everyone in her city about Him. Her testimony went on to greatly impact the people around her.

Watching God use you to help someone come to know Christ is THE most exhilarating and life-changing experience on earth. It never gets old! When you see a heart change as God makes someone into a new person, you’ll be amazed all over again at the power of the gospel. So stay open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Keep praying and abiding in Jesus. God can do great things through your life and your willingness to share Him with others.

Not only will someone else’s life never be the same. Neither will yours.

This plan was adapted from *Devoted to Jesus: From First Steps to Fully Surrendered* by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick. Visit theforgebooks.com to learn more or purchase your copy.