

Being a Disciple: Counting the Real Cost



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4minute
BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



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P R E S S

BEING A DISCIPLE: COUNTING THE REAL COST

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Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning more about what the Bible says, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mother's group meeting in a home, or a smaller Sunday-school class. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time, while you're together*.

However, you'll need a facilitator to lead the group—someone to keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you as a leader choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.
- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson,

including the “insight boxes,” which may appear either before or after the instructions or in the midst of your observations or discussion. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.

- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week’s lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week’s discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don’t want to slow the pace too much. It’s much better to leave everyone “wanting more” than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Really *read* the Scriptures, asking God to show everyone His answers.

WEEK ONE

Most people are followers of someone. Someone catches their attention, captures their imagination, or shares the same interests and values. Consequently they want to know more about that person—the goals he or she is pursuing, the accomplishments attained. They want to talk and learn from this person. And if what they find is pleasing or applicable to their desires and ambitions, they want to emulate him, pursue his interests, or take up his cause.

Basically we are followers of those who have gone before us or those who have achieved what we want to achieve. This may be our parents, our peers, our teachers, or our heroes in the realms of our interest—but there is usually someone we want to be like because we believe in who he is or what he is about.

A disciple is a follower. Moses had disciples, the Pharisees had disciples, John the Baptist had disciples.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He, too, looked for disciples so that, when His work was finished and He left to be with the Father again, there would be others who would faithfully carry on the work of the kingdom of God—a kingdom that was now at hand.

OBSERVE

As we begin, let's look at a passage that shows us how Jesus called His first disciples.

Leader: Read aloud Matthew 4:17-22.

- Mark the word **follow** by underlining it and putting an arrow on the end of the line, like this: 

MATTHEW 4:17-22

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of

Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

DISCUSS

- When Jesus asked them to follow Him, what did He say He would make them?
- What had they been doing?
- What do you think Jesus meant by “fishers of men”?

***Leader:** Have the group share in fifteen seconds or less what some of them were doing when Jesus first called them to believe on Him. Why did they follow Him?*

OBSERVE

The pond from which the disciples were going to fish was the world! You might say this was the private lake of the devil—or so the devil thought! But Jesus knew He had many fish who needed to be netted into the kingdom of God.

Leader: *In Matthew 10:16-22, we have a portion of Jesus' instructions to the twelve disciples (whom He also appointed as apostles) before He sent them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Read the passage aloud and have the group...*

- circle every **instruction** that Jesus gives them.
- underline everything that is going to **happen** to them.

DISCUSS

- Does what Jesus said sound very appealing or attractive?
- What are the things that can or will happen to them as His disciples? Talk about what you have underlined.
- What are Jesus' instructions?

MATTHEW 10:16-22

16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

19 “But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

20 “For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

21 “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

22 “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

- Are there any assurances? promises of help?
- Would you say Jesus was “up front” about what it means to follow Him? Why?
- If those things were going to happen to you, would you still want to follow Jesus?
- Do you realize that these things are happening to many Christians around the world today? And it has happened in every age—beginning with the first twelve of His disciples!

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Matthew 10:24-31.

- *Mark every reference to **disciple**, including pronouns, in the same way you marked “follow” by underlining it and putting an arrow on the end of the line.*
- *Mark every occurrence of the word **fear** with a series of short lines.*

DISCUSS

- What did Jesus teach them about a disciple’s relationship to his master?
- What were they not to fear? What were they supposed to fear? (List these under the headings provided.)

Not to Fear**To Fear****MATTHEW 10:24-31**

24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

25 “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

26 “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

27 “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”

- What are the reasons they shouldn't fear? What can the disciples be assured of?

Leader: *When answering this last question, make sure the group looks at verse 29 very carefully. Don't miss “apart from your Father”—which means, “without His knowledge and therefore His permission”! Follow this point by tying in verses 30-31.*

- What are Jesus' instructions in this passage? What are His disciples to do?

Leader: *Read aloud the Insight Box.*

INSIGHT

Beelzebul is a name of Satan. Some accused Jesus of being from the devil, Satan. If they accused Jesus of this, then the disciples could expect to be accused of the same.

OBSERVE

Jesus has more to say to His disciples, so let's continue with Matthew 10:32-40.

Leader: Read aloud Matthew 10:32-40.

- Circle the words **everyone**, **whoever**, and **He**.
- Mark with a cross every reference to **Jesus**, including pronouns: †
- Mark **therefore** with three dots in the form of a triangle: ∴.

DISCUSS

- *Therefore* is a term of conclusion—a kind of wrapping up of a thought. As you read this portion, did you see a change in what was being said? a conclusion? What is happening in verses 32-40?
- What is the contrast between the “everyone” and the “whoever” in verses 32-33? And what is Jesus’ response to both?

MATTHEW 10:32-40

32 “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 “For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

36 and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

- Does this seem hard on Jesus' part, or reasonable? Does it matter whether it is reasonable or not?

- What does Jesus want His disciples to understand in verses 34-37? Is this the first time you've read this? What is clarified even more about the disciples' relationship to Jesus Christ?

- What does it take to have this kind of allegiance to Jesus Christ? What is the promise of such commitment? (Look closely at verses 38-39.)

- In verse 40, what do you learn about the relationship between Jesus and His disciples? About Jesus' relationship with the Father?

Leader: *Read aloud the Insight Box.*

INSIGHT

The Greek word translated as *disciple* comes from a verb that means “to learn.” A disciple attached himself to another to gain practical or theoretical knowledge by instruction or experience. It was a word used of apprentices learning a trade as well as students learning a teacher’s philosophy.

Discipleship was a popular concept in the Jewish religion of Jesus’ day. Customarily, disciples left home and moved in with their teacher, who provided their food and lodging. The disciples became his servants and were under his total authority. They were to learn everything the teacher knew—becoming like him in character—and were later to faithfully transmit this to others.

WRAP IT UP

Honestly, how do you feel when you read these scriptures we've looked at this week?

How relevant do you think they are to today?

Do you think these things pertained only to the twelve disciples of Jesus—or could they possibly apply to us?

These are strong teachings, aren't they? Have you ever wondered if *every* Christian is called to be a disciple—and if so, how such knowledge and understanding of Jesus' requirements for disciples might change the way we present the Lord Jesus Christ to others? What do you think?

Talk to God about it—ask Him what He thinks...