



Introduction

During His life, Jesus invited many to a special relationship. He asked them to leave what they were doing and follow Him as His disciple. Many responded, both men and women. For three years they listened and watched as He loved and taught. His purpose in having them follow Him was to bring about faith in their heart. It's a faith that recognized that He was who He said, and that He would do what He had promised.

He continues even now to call each one who has believed on His name to discipleship. This study will explore the nature of His call and the commitment He is asking you to make.

Discipleship Described

At various times in His ministry, Jesus made statements describing the things that would characterize His disciples.

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;" (NASV)
John 8:31

- Circle the activity that identifies a true disciple.
- Underline the ones to whom Jesus directed His comment.
- To **continue** means *not to depart or leave. The word can also be translated "abide" or "live in". Jesus is saying that a disciple is one who consistently and continually makes God's Word his home.*

Further, Jesus wasn't just interested in His disciples knowing His word. He wanted them to put his words into practice.

³⁴ *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
John 13:34-35

- Circle the command Jesus gave to His disciples.
- Underline the example of love they were to follow.
- Draw a box around the reason He gave this command.


Jesus also used fruitfulness to describe discipleship.

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
John 15:8

- Circle the quality that characterizes a disciple.
- Underline the one who gets glory.

Putting them together, a disciple is one who is fruitful, loving and committed to following God's Word. But there is more to it than just these things.

Jesus invited many to be His disciples. He simply said "follow me". Some of those invitations were recorded for our benefit.

 Matthew 4:19
Matthew 9:9
John 1:43

Webster's Dictionary defines **disciple** as "one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another".

You can get more ideas on how to build loving relationships in the **vDRC** study "Loving People" in the **Relating to Men** section of the **vDRC** website

The Commitment of Home and Family

Being a disciple can interfere with family relationships. Peter and John left their father's business to follow Jesus. Others received challenges of a different kind.

⁵⁷ *As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."* ⁵⁸ *Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

Luke 9:57-58

- Underline the commitment being made in verse 57.
- Circle the place that Jesus takes His rest.
- *Jesus is saying to this man that following Him offered no assurance of a bed to sleep in or a place to stay.*

⁵⁹ *He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."* ⁶⁰ *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

Luke 9:59-60

- Underline the request the man made to Jesus.
- *"The dead" that Jesus refers to are people of the world who have not been redeemed by Jesus. Even though they are alive, they are spiritually dead. Jesus indicates that they will take care of the father when he dies.*

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:26

- Underline how a disciple is to relate to his family.
- Circle the family members the disciple is to "hate".
- *"Hate" as used here is a comparative word. That is, a disciple's love for Jesus should so exceed the love for his family that in comparison, the love for his family would seem like hate.*

These were hard requirements then, just as they are hard requirements now. But Jesus also makes a wonderful promise.

²⁸ *Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"* ²⁹ *"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God* ³⁰ *will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."*

Luke 18:28-30

- Underline the commitment Peter had made in verse 28.
- Circle the promise in verse 30 for those who leave home or family for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Many will readily offer to follow Jesus. But Jesus makes it clear that the foxes and birds are better off than His disciples when it comes to a place to stay.

Even so, your heavenly Father knows that you need a place to stay. And of how much more worth are you than many foxes and birds?

Do you think that not having a place to sleep might keep someone from following Jesus?

This request was not for leave to go to a funeral. Rather, the person had an elderly father who had not yet died. Perhaps years would go by until his death.

Do you think that placing family ahead of discipleship might keep someone from following Jesus?

Matthew 10:37 is a parallel passage that sheds more insight into what Jesus meant by the word "hate":



"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

Matthew 10:37

The Commitment of Finances

Jesus' call to discipleship was costly to those who responded. Those who were closest to Him all left their jobs to be His disciple. There was one young man who was very rich who refused Jesus' invitation.

¹⁸ *A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

¹⁹ *"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"*

²¹ *"All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.*

²² *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

²³ *When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.*

²⁴ *Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

Luke 18:18-25

- In verse 22, underline the thing that was lacking in this man's life.
- *The invitation to discipleship came at the end of verse 22.*
- Underline in verse 23 why the man was sad.
- *Why are riches an obstacle to discipleship?*

Consider this teaching of Jesus:

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Matthew 6:24

- Underline why a person cannot serve two masters.
- Circle the master that you want to serve: God or Money.
- *In what way is Money a master?*

It is important to note that this verse is **not** saying that giving to the poor is a condition for inheriting eternal life.

The New Testament is very clear that salvation comes through faith and faith alone. It is not a result of keeping the law or doing good things. (See Ephesians 2:8-9)

Jesus was putting his finger on a part of this man's life that he had made off-limits to God. This ruler was more than willing to keep all of the commandments, but his possessions were more important to him than following Jesus.

Jesus may not ask you to give away everything you have. But He will focus directly on the thing you love more than Him.

Consider verse 20: Which of the ten commandments did Jesus not include in His list? See Exodus 20:2-17

Do you think his love for money violated any of the other commandments? Why or why not?

Paul provided this perspective on riches.



⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...

1 Tim 6:9-10

***For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.
1 Timothy 6:7***

The Commitment of Self

Perhaps the hardest discipleship commitment involves the love we have for our self. Jesus made the terms of this commitment clear.

²³ Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

Luke 9:23-24

- The context of this passage is a private discussion Jesus was having with his disciples (Luke 9:18)
- Circle to whom this statement is directed.
- Underline the two actions a disciple must take to "come after" Jesus.
- Draw a box around the frequency with which these things should happen.
- To **deny** means to disregard ones own interests
- In verse 24, circle the result of trying to save your life.
- In that same verse underline the result of losing your life.

Jesus restates the requirement in another place.

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27

- Underline what the disciple must "carry".
- Jesus is not here talking about a physical cross. He is talking about the absolute requirement that disciples must be dead to their own self-interests. Carrying the cross as you follow is a condition of discipleship.

**Take my love my God, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only all for Thee,
Ever, only all for Thee**

Francis R. Havergal

Count the Cost

As Jesus listed the requirements of discipleship in Luke 14, he described the importance of counting the cost by using the example of a builder and the example of a king at war (see sidebar). Then he said the following:

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33

- Circle what Jesus expects His disciples to give up.
- What do you have that you could not give up?



The cross is an instrument of death. Jesus is asking each one who chooses to follow Him to die. This is not an actual physical death. Rather it is dying to the desires of self-centered living.

Here are other calls to die to your self.



John 12:24-25
Romans 6:3-7
Colossians 3:5-9



²⁸ "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
³¹ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Luke 14:28-32

Jesus warned that those who follow him as disciples would have opposition.

²⁰ Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

John 15:20-21

- Circle the kind of treatment Jesus' followers can expect.
- Underline from verse 20, why a disciple can expect persecution.
- Underline from verse 21, why a disciple can expect persecution.

Paul describes his experience of discipleship.

⁴ Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; ⁵ in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger

* * *

⁸ through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; ⁹ known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

- Verse 4 and 5 describe some of Paul's difficulties.
- Circle the difficulty that would be the hardest for you to endure.
- Verses 8 through 10 contrast different events, emotions and qualities of life.
- Based on his statements in verse 10, do you think Paul felt deprived as a result of being Jesus' disciple? Why or why not?

Each person's experience of discipleship will be different. Because Paul went through difficulties is no reason to assume that your experience will match his. God's plan is unique for each person he calls.

Why Be a Disciple?

If Jesus expects such complete commitment from His followers, the logical question is this: Why would anyone want to be a disciple?

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

- Circle the thing that compelled Paul in verse 14.
- Underline in verse 15 the one for whom someone should live.
- Are you convinced that Jesus has died for all?
- Are you convinced that you should no longer live for yourself but for Him?

Paul relates more details of his life story and the things that happened to him in 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Notice that even though Paul had nothing in terms of possessions, property or wealth, he felt like he possessed everything.

When you have experienced God's forgiveness and love, it is natural to respond with love in return. We love because He first loved us.

Paul gives us an insight as to why he was a follower of Jesus.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Philippians 3:8

- Circle the things Paul was willing to lose.
- Compared to those things, underline the thing of surpassing value to Paul.
- Draw a box around the word Paul uses to describe everything he has lost.
- *The context of this verse pertains to Paul's Jewish heritage and his attainments as a Pharisee.*

Knowing Jesus became Paul's highest goal. More than anything else, he wanted to know the Lord Jesus. There is no better way to relate to Jesus, than as His disciple. There is no quicker path to knowledge of Him than through yielding to the call to discipleship.

Summary

Can you place a verse reference by each summary statement below?

A disciple is someone who

- Lives in and practices God's Word
- Has a life characterized by love
- Bears fruit

A Disciple's commitment includes

- Family
- Finances
- Dying to self

The cost of being a disciple includes

- A requirement to give up all things
- An expectation of persecution
- An expectation of hardship

Becoming a Disciple makes sense because

- God's love is compelling
- It is the best way to get to know Jesus.

Application

The opportunity is there before you. Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Entering into discipleship is done in the same way as entering into the Kingdom of God: through prayer. Jesus hears your heart, not simply your words. Tell Him what you want to do and invite Him to teach you.

Next, find someone older in the Lord and tell him what you have done. Ask him to help you as you seek to walk as a disciple of the Lord Jesus.



The statements in this summary are drawn from the preceding materials. Look back and find the reference that supports the summary statement.

Perhaps you have no one near by who can help you in your new discipleship endeavor. You can send a note to the vDRC website at respond@vdrc.org. We will help you find some people who have made the same kind of commitment as you.