

FOLLOW ME



WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Follow Me is a six-lesson study on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and more importantly, a *disciple-maker*. Jesus' method of teaching was by Word and example, and is designed to be learned and *reproduced*. If you are following Jesus for yourself, without intent to pass on what you are learning, then you're doing it wrong! In this series of lessons, you'll dive in to Scripture to see how Jesus made disciples who made disciples. His teaching is still the foundation of how we know Jesus and grow to be more like Him today.

These lessons are designed for a small group of 8-10 people, but can also be studied independently. If going on your own, just skip the group activities—but be sure to read and answer the group question sections, as this is an important part of the study. If you are going through it with your small group, allow at least 45 minutes for the in-depth teaching of each lesson. You'll need this time to go through all the Scriptures and questions so you can get the maximum benefit.

Additional resources are available online at crosspointechurch.com/journeys. You'll find this specific journey online at crosspointechurch.com/followme.

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LESSON 1: WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Key Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22

Memory Verse: “Come, Follow me,” Jesus said, “And I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

Context

Matthew 4:18-22 takes place at the very beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. In Matthew chapters 1-2 we have the birth of Christ. In chapter 3 we see the baptism of Jesus. At the opening of Matthew 4, Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Then Jesus learns that John the Baptist has been imprisoned so He returns to Galilee (4:12) and begins to preach what John the Baptist had been preaching... “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 4:17).

This brings us to our key Scripture as Jesus is calling the first four of His twelve disciples (Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John). Note that one of the first things Jesus does is to call this small group of men to follow and learn from Him.

The Call

As we study this passage, it is important to examine exactly what Jesus meant when He invited these men to follow Him. We commonly hear the term disciple as it refers to the twelve men that Jesus called. But they were not His only followers. Several times in the New Testament we see the crowds that followed Jesus referred to as His disciples. Matthew 26:56 and John 6:66 both even say that many of the people who called themselves His disciples deserted, turned back, and no longer followed Him. A disciple was not a term reserved only for those who believed in Jesus. John 1 tells us that John the Baptist also had disciples. A disciple is simply a learner, an apprentice or understudy, a student. So what is a disciple of Christ and what makes him different?

A disciple is a lifetime learner and follower of Jesus Christ who surrenders his or her life to God’s mission.

The Relationship

A disciple of Christ is someone who answers the call to follow Christ by surrendering his or her life to God’s mission. The relationship that Jesus was calling these men to was different than the relationship He had with any others on earth. They were the first in a long line of Christ-followers, or disciples. It is in Jesus’ relationship

with these twelve men that we first see God’s plan to reach all the peoples of the earth with His Gospel through reproducing disciples of His Son. It is in Christ’s example with His twelve disciples that we learn how to truly impact the world for Him. It is here that God shows us the simple and effective method of multiplication.

Jesus invited these men to follow Him not just so they could know Him and go to heaven one day, but also so that He could transform them into His own image. This is how He knew His teaching would continue to spread after His resurrection and ascension. He called them, trained them, and loved them. Then they called others, trained others and loved others like He had to them—even to the point of death—so that the message would continue to go forth to the ends of the earth. Jesus “multiplied” Himself through building relationships with these twelve men.

Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, “Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The invitation was to follow Him, know Him intimately and learn from Him first-hand, then to go out and follow His example as they related to and trained others. Ultimately, this is the same invitation we have today.

Come, Follow Me...

Matthew 4:18 tells us that Simon (later called Peter) and his brother Andrew were casting fishing nets into the lake when Jesus saw them. He approaches them and says “Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” The Greek word for follow in this verse is *deute*, which means “Come here! Come now!” Jesus is not saying, “Take some time to think about it and get back to me.” His call is to leave everything and come now. Further, the word follow is in the imperative mood in the Greek. That means that it is a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the order and authority of the one commanding. The invitation is a command that, once accepted, requires full obedience.

Does that mean that Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John had no choice but to obey Christ? Did they have to follow Jesus and become fishers of men because it was a command? No, they chose to obey. But it’s important to note that once they obeyed, Jesus sets the conditions of being His disciple. The one receiving the invitation doesn’t decide what being a disciple will cost or require—the one issuing the invitation does.

Call of Christ: An invitation that once accepted requires full obedience and surrender to His conditions, as in response to a command.

Jesus' invitation to follow Him was an all-or-nothing invitation—come here and come now! There was a cost for the call. Additionally, Jesus determines the blessing that His disciples would receive for their obedience. There are blessings for answering the call. There is also a purpose in the call—and it is a God-given purpose.

A Promise to True Disciples

Remember we said that Jesus sets the conditions, but also promises a blessing for His disciples. John 8:12 contains an incredible promise: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The Greek word for follow in this verse is *akoloutheo*, and it means "to join as an attendant, to become a disciple." Those who become Christ's disciples will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. This doesn't mean the disciples would never face dark times or circumstances. But they would never face them apart from Christ Himself. He is the Light of life that is promised to those who follow Him [John 1:4].

Set Apart from The Crowd

So what distinguishes a true disciple of Christ from the crowds who claim to follow Him? Jesus spent much of His time explaining and teaching the characteristics that would be evident in the life of a true disciple.

John 8:31 says that if you are really His disciple you will obey His Word. In John 13:35, Jesus says that all men will know who His disciples are by how they love one another. John 15:8 says that we show ourselves to truly be His disciples when we bear fruit with our lives. This is the God-given purpose of Christ's disciples. John 15:16 goes on to say that He appointed us as His disciples "to go and bear fruit." And this fruit will not just be good deeds, but "fruit that will last."

The Result of the Call

In verse 19, Jesus not only calls these men to follow Him, He also tells them why He wants them to come. He says, "Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Verse 20 tells us that they immediately left their nets and followed Him. It is important to note that being Christ's disciple requires giving up a former way of life completely in order to fully surrender to Christ's mission. These four would no longer be ordinary fishermen. Now they would be fishers of men. The phrase "fishers of men" may seem odd, but we must remember that all four of the men Jesus is calling in this passage are fishermen by trade, so He was speaking to them in terms they understood.

In John's account of this event, Andrew even calls Jesus "Rabbi," which means teacher [John 1:38]. The natural result of these four following Jesus is that they will learn to be fishers of men. To use the fishing analogy, Jesus "caught" them so that He can now train them to "catch" others. The way that God planned for His Gospel to be shared is through this teacher-learner relationship. In this passage we see Jesus Himself begin to live out God's plan. We call this simple method of learning and reproducing disciple-making.

Disciple-Making: The simple and life-long process of following Christ, becoming more like Him, and leading others to do the same.

Very Simple

How will they learn to be "fishers of men?" The answer is so simple that we often miss it. They will learn by just being with Christ. Jesus didn't lay out a step-by-step process for disciple-making. He just did it. His life was the lesson. And because they chose to leave their fishing nets and follow Him, they had a front-row seat to the entire ministry of Jesus Christ. The natural result of answering the call to follow Christ and be His disciple is that we learn how to make disciples.

Don't let the short passage in Scripture lead you to believe this was an overnight process. Being Jesus' disciple for these men meant spending three years literally following Jesus everywhere He went. They learned from Jesus as He taught the crowds, and there would be times when Jesus took the twelve aside and taught them privately. They saw first-hand how Jesus loved and met the needs of others as He healed them, and then Jesus gave them authority and sent them out to do the same [Matthew 10:1,5].

There would be times that Jesus questioned their faith [Luke 8:25], and times that He washed their feet [John 13:5]. The result of them being in such close relationship with Christ would be a life forever changed, and a new perspective on their purpose in life. He is their Lord [master] and Savior, but He is also their Rabbi [teacher] and their friend. They would naturally begin to train and lead others because they had been shown how to do it by Christ Himself.

Notice, too, there is a difference between a process that is simple, and one that is easy. This process in our lives today will not effectively take place in the confines of a classroom, but is a lifestyle of modeling,

training and reproducing Christ in the lives of those around us every day. Jesus poured His life into others—our surrender to disciple-making requires the same commitment.

Fruit That Lasts

Remember that John 15:16 says Jesus appoints us as His disciples to bear fruit that will last. Isn't this what we see Jesus doing by calling these four disciples in Matthew 4:18-22? He is appointing them to follow Him so that they can bear fruit [or, become fishers of men]. The next three years leading up to the cross Jesus will be living His life with these disciples showing them "fruit that lasts". Jesus will teach them to be like Himself by living His life alongside them. He is inviting them to follow Him, learn from Him and see how He wants them to live and serve others by making disciples to the ends of the earth.

Fruit: The one true and eternal result of disciple-making—people.

Make the Connection

Fast forward 2,000 years and what was the fruit? We are Christ-followers today because eleven of these twelve men were obedient, and continued to live as Christ lived and train as He trained. The question now is ours to answer—will we answer the call to follow Him, so He can make us fishers of men? And if we have already answered the call, will we be faithful to extend the call to others? Will we connect the blessing of our salvation with the purpose for which we've been saved?

TEACHING (This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.)

Introduction / 5-10 minutes

Begin your time together by talking about the childhood game of "Follow the Leader." Ask the group if they remember how to play the game, the rules of the game, how you are eliminated from the game, the role of the "leader," the role of the "followers," what you must do to win the game, etc. If it will work in your small-group setting, you could even play the game for a few minutes as an illustration. Make sure to focus on the role of the leader and the role of the followers.

Ask questions like:

- What would the game be like if everyone tried to lead?
- What would the game be like if everyone tried to follow?

- What lessons can children learn from this childhood game?
- In real life, why is it important to have leaders and followers?
- What qualities make an effective leader?
- What qualities make a good follower?

Have students open their Bibles to Matthew 4:18-22. Explain that today we will be studying Jesus' calling of the first four of His twelve disciples. Before you begin the study time in God's Word, pray that God would make every person present today receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group as you discuss His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the group into all truth (John 16:13) so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person's life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today (James 1:22).

Observation / What does the Scripture say?

Begin by reading [or having a student read] Matthew 4:18-22 aloud. Then, lead a discussion by using the following questions about the Scripture. This section is designed to help your students determine exactly what the Scripture says. Guide the discussion in such a way that the group doesn't jump ahead to try to determine what the Scripture means, or how it applies to their lives. At this point we are simply observing. This will lay the groundwork for accurate interpretation and application later.

- What was Jesus' invitation to Andrew and Simon Peter in verse 19?
- What did Jesus tell them He would do if they followed Him?
- What does verse 20 tell us Andrew and Peter did?
- How quickly did they follow Him and what did they leave behind?
- What invitation did Jesus give James and John? Was it similar to what He said to Andrew and Simon Peter?
- According to verse 21, what were James and John doing when Jesus called them?
- Who and what did they leave behind?

Interpretation / What does the Scripture mean?

Using the commentary section at the beginning of the lesson that you read prior to your meeting time, explain the Greek definition and mood of *deute* [follow] in Matthew 4:19. Then ask the following questions.

- Based on this definition, what was the implication of answering Jesus' call to follow Him? Who set the conditions?

- Based on how quickly these four men answered the call, do you think they understood this?
- Why do you think Jesus used the term “fishers of men?”
- What did Jesus mean by this term? How would they “fish” for men?

Using the commentary portion again, talk about what a disciple is. Explain that Jesus was calling these men into a teacher/learner relationship with Him, and that His relationship with them would be different from His relationship with anyone else on earth.

Now, have students look up the following passages and read them aloud. As each person reads, list the characteristics or requirements of a disciple (“follower”) on the whiteboard, or have someone keep a list.

- Luke 14:27
- Luke 5:27-28
- Mark 10:21
- Matthew 16:24
- John 12:26

Explain that all of these verses use the same Greek word for follow. It is the word *akoloutho*. Give the definition of *akoloutho* from the commentary section. Then, lead a discussion using the following questions:

- What similarities do you see in all of these verses regarding following Christ?
- What must one do to follow Christ?
- Who is establishing the dynamics of this relationship, the Caller or the one being called? How does this relate to the command word “follow” (*deute*) in Matthew 4:19?

It is true that being a disciple of Christ will require a complete and total surrender of our lives to His mission. But what we gain far outweighs what we sacrifice. Read John 8:12 aloud.

- What is Jesus’ promise to His followers in this verse?

Read John 1:4.

- Based on this verse, what does this promise mean? What does it not mean?

Read John 15:16.

- According to this verse, why did Jesus appoint His disciples? What was their God-given purpose?
- What kind of fruit were they to bear according to this verse? Would it be temporary?

Lead a discussion to connect Jesus’ calling of these four men in Matthew 4:18-22 with His purpose in John

15:16. Talk about being “fishers of men” as a means to bear “lasting fruit.” Stress that this was not an overnight change, but a life-long process that resulted from being in relationship with Jesus. Using the commentary at the beginning of the lesson, explain what disciple-making is and that by reproducing ourselves through disciple-making we obey His command to bear fruit that lasts [John 15:16].

Application / How will this Truth change me?

- Read John 17:20 and explain that this is from Jesus’ prayer to God before His crucifixion. Who is Jesus praying for according to this verse?
- Does that include us today? Why?
- How did the message of Christ come to us?
- What would have happened if the disciples didn’t reproduce more disciples? What would have been the result 2,000 years later in your own life?
- What will be the result for those who still don’t know Christ if you don’t make disciples?

Remind the group that the first step to being a disciple-maker is to answer Jesus’ call to be His disciple. You can’t make disciples if you aren’t one. The question for Christ-followers is, how do we obey Jesus’ command in John 15:16 to “bear fruit that will last?” How will we join in the long line of believers who came before us to be “fishers of men?” The answer is so simple it is often missed.

Have someone read John 15:5-8.

- In these verses, how does Jesus tell us we will bear fruit?

Share with the students that the Greek meaning of the word “remain” in these verses is, “To continue to be present; to be held or kept continually; to last; endure; to wait.” It is very similar to the words abide or communion.

- How do you see this in the lives of Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John? Did they remain in Christ?
- What lasting fruit did they bear as a result of their relationship with Christ? Can we in this classroom be considered their fruit?
- How do Christ-followers remain in [abide; be with] Christ today?
- Can someone who doesn’t remain in Christ truly be His disciple?
- What will be the fruit of our lives if we remain in Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1.

- What bold statement does Paul make in this verse?

- Whose example is Paul following? How does that affect his ability to make this statement?
- Who is walking with Christ today as a result of your life?

Encourage the group to allow God to examine their hearts by asking the question, “Who am I following?” If we are following Christ, then we should also be modeling Christ to others with our lives, and be able to say with Paul, “follow my example as I follow Christ’s example.” We don’t set the conditions of Jesus’ call. When we choose to answer and accept eternal life, we give up our personal agenda to surrender to Christ’s mission. Jesus is saying the same thing to us that He said to His disciples over 2,000 years ago. “*Freely you have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:8).

A Song That Calls

There’s an old hymn that speaks to the call of the disciples called “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” If you have a moment at the close of your time together, you may want to reflect on these words, or sing the song together.

I have decided, to follow Jesus,
I have decided, to follow Jesus,
I have decided, to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back.

Though I may wonder, I still will follow,
Though I may wonder, I still will follow,
Though I may wonder, I still will follow,
No turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, still I will follow,
Though none go with me, still I will follow,
Though none go with me, still I will follow,
No turning back, no turning back!

The world behind me, the cross before me,
The world behind me, the cross before me,
The world behind me, the cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back!

Will you decide now, to follow Jesus,
Will you decide now, to follow Jesus,
Will you decide now, to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back!

For Further Examination

Jesus describes true disciples in the following verses:

- John 10:4
- John 8:31
- John 13:35

LESSON 2: SHARE THE WORD

Key Scriptures: John 1:29-51, John 17:1-8

Memory Verse: “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” John 17:3

Review

In last week’s lesson we biblically defined the word disciple and saw how the lasting fruit (John 15:16) of being a disciple is born by multiplying ourselves in the lives of others. This is what disciple-making is—the simple and life-long process of following Christ, becoming more like Him, and leading others to do the same. This week we are going to begin to see how being a disciple-maker can begin in our lives.

“Are”, Not “Do”

There is no set process or program to “do” disciple-making. It just becomes who we are—and it is relational, so it looks different in every disciple’s life. However, it does require intentionality on the part of every believer. It is the natural fruit of the true disciple’s life, but like fruit, it must be nurtured in order to grow. Every disciple-maker makes a choice to intentionally invest himself in the lives of others.

Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples

John 17 is Jesus’ prayer to the Father on behalf of His disciples. In this chapter, we see Jesus’ love and concern for His disciples. He wants His work on earth to continue through them. In verses 1-8, Jesus is telling God that He has no doubt that His disciples believe He is the Messiah and that God sent Him. In verse 3, Jesus describes eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ, the One God sent. It is interesting to note that in verse 4, Jesus says He has completed the work God gave Him to do. Yet this prayer was prayed before Jesus died on the cross. What work is He referring to?

Verse 6 answers that question. Jesus says He has revealed God to those God gave Him out of the world. “Those God gave Him” are His twelve disciples. Jesus goes on to say in verses 7 and 8 that He gave His disciples the words that God gave Him and that they accepted these words. The disciples know for certain that God sent Jesus. Most of us have heard all of our lives that God sent Jesus to earth to die on the cross to save us from our sins. Isn’t it interesting that according to Jesus’ own words in these verses,

He also came to earth to reveal God to these men by making them His disciples?

Believing Jesus Is Who He Says He Is

Jesus shows us in the first 8 verses of this prayer the foundation of being His disciple. At its core, being a disciple is believing that Jesus is who He says He is. We saw this truth last week in our study of Matthew 4:18-22 when Jesus called the first four disciples. Would they have left everything to follow Him if they didn't believe He was who He said He was? Obviously, their belief grew over the next three years as they spent time with Jesus and came to know Him more intimately and personally. But there was initial faith in the person of Christ. That is at the core of all who follow Christ. This is why Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace, through faith, not by works. Our "works" do not bring us salvation. Faith does, by God's grace. The Christ-like character and deeds come later.

Diving In

Today we are going to dive into how this foundation of being a disciple (belief that Jesus is who He says He is) relates to disciple-making. The lesson will not rest in John 17:1-8 but instead journey to different passages of Scripture that illustrate the intentionality of disciple-making and the truth communicated in John 17:1-8.

Looking Again at The Disciples' Call

Our lesson this week will focus on the Gospel of John's account of the same event we studied last week in Matthew 4:18-22. John describes the event differently than Matthew does. We need to understand that the two accounts do not contradict one another. The writers are two different people with separate personalities, so their attention to detail is different. All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and thus cannot contradict itself. This passage clearly illustrates the foundation of being a disciple (belief that Jesus is who He says He is) and how this belief compels us to begin the first step in disciple-making, which is telling others what we believe about Christ. In other words, we are to share the Word.

For our lesson, we will break John 1:29-51, the key passage, into three parts. This will make it simpler to handle during your discussion time with your group.

Part 1: John 1:29-34

In this passage, we see how intentionality is at the heart of making disciples. The foundation of being a disciple is having faith in Christ. And this faith compels the disciple to tell others about Christ, which

is the first component of disciple-making—sharing the Word. The passage begins with John the Baptist proclaiming who Christ is to those around him. In verse 29, John the Baptist describes Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In verse 30, he goes on to tell the people that Jesus is the One he has been preaching to them about, the One who would come after him and baptize not with water, as John does, but with the Holy Spirit. In verses 32-34, John testifies that he himself believes Jesus is the Son of God.

In this passage we see that God has revealed to John who Jesus is—the Son of God—and that John has believed this truth about Christ. The result is that John the Baptist intentionally shares with others what God has shown him about Jesus.

The foundation of being a disciple is having faith in Christ.

Part 2: John 1:35-42

Now look what happens in verses 35-36: The next day, Jesus comes by again, and John again intentionally shares with two of his disciples who Jesus is—the Lamb of God. Then in verses 37-39 these two men follow Jesus and spend the day with Him. In verse 38 they address Jesus as "Rabbi," which means "teacher." Verse 40 tells us that one of these two men is Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

How Did They Know?

Notice in verse 40 that these men followed Jesus after they heard what John the Baptist said about Him. So after John believed, he told others, which resulted in at least two men believing and following Christ. Then look what happens in verse 41. The "first thing" Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him they had found "the Messiah." Remember that in verse 38 Andrew addressed Jesus as "Rabbi." But now he testifies to his brother that Jesus is the Messiah. Do you see how his faith resulted in his telling his brother about Christ?

These verses don't tell us that Jesus performed any miracles that day. They just spent the day with Christ and they knew He was the Messiah. John the Baptist had told them He was the "Lamb of God." Andrew made the choice to follow Him and spend the day with Him. Then he went and found his brother and brought Simon to Jesus in verse 42. Here, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter. Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. This faith compelled him to find his brother and introduce him to Christ, also.

Andrew Tells Those Close To Him

It never occurred to Andrew to keep the truth about who Jesus was to himself. The first thing he did was to tell his brother. Notice, too, that in telling others he did not go out and start preaching to strangers in the street. He went and found one closest to himself—his brother—and told him. There probably would come a time when he would preach to strangers as Christ's disciple, but the natural first step of following Christ was to go find someone he knew who didn't know who Jesus was and bring him along.

Believing in Christ, making the choice to follow Him, and then leading others to do the same by telling them who Christ is.

Part 3: John 1:43-51

In this passage we see the same thing happen in another life. In verse 43, Jesus calls Philip to follow Him. Then in verse 45, Philip goes and finds Nathanael and tells him [verse 45] that he has found the One Moses prophesied about in the Law. In verse 46, Nathanael questions the truth that Jesus is who Moses wrote about.

Observe Philip's response to him. He doesn't argue or try to persuade him. He simply says, "Come and see." Here again, we see the intentionality of a disciple leading others to follow Christ by showing them who He is. In verses 47-48 Jesus stuns Nathanael by telling him where he was before Philip ever called him. In verse 49 Nathanael calls Jesus "Rabbi" and confesses that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

The first component of disciple-making is sharing the Word.

The Common Thread

In all three of these passages we see a common thread. Each person (John the Baptist, Andrew, and Philip) began by believing in the person of Christ. They believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. The result of that belief was an intentional choice to share this truth with others they knew. And none of these men had any idea how far-reaching their decision to tell others would be.

Far Reaching Results

Let's examine just some of the implications of this passage starting with John the Baptist. We see him tell two of his disciples who Jesus is in John 1:35. One of these disciples is Andrew and we see him tell his brother, Simon Peter, who Jesus is in John 1:41. There

is no way Andrew could have foreseen what would come out of his sharing Christ with his brother.

Now let's move to Matthew 16:13-18. This passage takes place after Jesus has already called all twelve of His disciples. In this passage Jesus is asking the disciples who people say that He is. The disciples tell Him that some say He is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or another prophet. In verse 15 Jesus asks Peter (Andrew's brother) directly who he thinks Jesus is. Peter responds in verse 16 by confessing that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus responds to Peter in verses 17-18 by telling him that He will build His church on Peter and his confession.

Now, look at Acts 2:14. This takes place at Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came down on the twelve apostles. In this verse, we see Peter stand up and address the crowd. Acts 2:15-40 contains his sermon in which he tells the crowd who Jesus is (remember his confession to Jesus in Matthew 16:16) and begs them to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. What was the result? Acts 2:41 tells us that 3,000 people accepted his message and were baptized—3,000 people!

Do you see the simplicity and effectiveness of disciple-making? John the Baptist, Andrew, and even Simon Peter could never have known the lasting fruit that would come from their obedience to be intentional about telling others who Christ is. And this does not even include the fruit that came as a result of Philip telling Nathanael...

Don't Wait to Share Christ

Can you imagine what would happen today if we became intentional about sharing with others who Christ is? Notice that John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip did not have the job of convincing others to follow Christ. They simply proclaimed who Jesus is and brought others to Him. Jesus is the One who saves. In each of these men's lives it began with their own confession of faith in the person of Christ. Then it was an intentional choice to tell others.

They didn't wait until they knew more or had it all figured out. We will never make disciples if we wait until we arrive at some abstract level of maturity, because the more you know about Christ, the more you realize how much more there is to know. We will never arrive at a point in our relationship with Him where we are "ready" to lead others. Following Christ and leading others to follow Him are not exclusive. They are simultaneous.

Seeing Jesus Today

We cannot literally take people to Christ the human like John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip did since He no longer walks the earth. Or does He? If He lives in us through the Holy Spirit, doesn't He still walk the earth? He walks in us and through us. That is why, as we studied last week, abiding in [or remaining in or with] Him is the only way to bear lasting fruit through making disciples. We cannot do it; only He can. Just as John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip brought people to Christ to see who He was, that is what we must do. Only now, it is our lives that must say "come and see," as Philip said to Nathanael.

Getting Practical

So how do we practically apply this truth to our lives? In John 4:34-36 Jesus told His disciples to open their eyes and look at the fields because they are ripe for harvest. What fields was He talking about? The fields are the nations and Jesus was stressing to His disciples the importance of sharing the gospel with the world around them.

You've heard the term "making disciples of all nations" before (Matthew 28:19-20). So how do we make disciples of all nations? That seems so big, so idealistic and unattainable. How can I, one person, reach the nations?

We will do it the same way John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip and Peter did. By intentionally finding people in our lives who don't know Christ and telling them who He is. This is where disciple-making will start in our lives. It won't end there—it certainly didn't in John the Baptist's, Andrew's, Philip's or Peter's lives. But what we need now is a beginning. Christ will be faithful to show us the rest. The question is, have we believed in Him? If so, have we opened our eyes and looked at the fields? They are ripe for the harvest of eternal life.

The Workers

Matthew 9:37-38 says the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Jesus goes on to tell His disciples in this passage to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the field. We are the few workers. And we must ask the Lord to send more workers.

But think about it—how is He going to send more workers? Will He just drop them out of heaven? No, of course not. It is still His plan to use us to lead others to Christ. And as we give ourselves to disciple-making, He will use us to multiply the workers in the harvest field. He will send more workers through us,

not to us! When we are intentional about multiplying our lives into others, the fruit of our lives will be an ever-increasing army of workers in the harvest field. And the Lord of the harvest will work through us as we penetrate the nations sharing His Word. And the inevitable result? He alone will get the glory!

TEACHING (This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.)

Introduction / 5 minutes

Begin your time together by doing the following activity to illustrate the effectiveness of disciple-making. First, ask for two students from the group who are willing to help with the activity. You will need to discuss this activity with them before your group meets. Have them come up to the front of the room with you.

Instruct the first student to go and get five people [adjust the number based on your class size] to come stand with him/her at the front of the room. The student should pick five people and ask them all at once to come up and stand with him/her. Next, instruct the other student to get five people up to the front of the room, but he/she can only tell one other person, and that person can only tell one other person, etc. This will illustrate multiplication. After the second student has five others, have them sit down and ask the group the following questions.

- How many people did the first person tell to come to the front of the room?
- How many people did the second person tell to come to the front of the room?
- Did the fact that the first student told more people initially result in him/her reaching more people?
- In fact, which student would have had more people standing with them if the activity had continued past five people?
- Now, if I told you to go out and reach five people for Christ this year, how many of you think you could do it?
- How many of us would not even try because in our mind that means we would have to tell five different people about Christ and them believe?
- In this context, which example we saw is more effective for leading others to Christ, telling five people at one time or just telling one person and training them to lead one person, etc.?

Share with your group that today we will continue our study of disciple-making. And much like the activity

we just saw, we will see in Scripture how telling one person about Christ can lead to many more believing in Him. Impress on the group the word share. Sharing the Word is the first step in biblical disciple-making.

Review / 5 minutes

Before you begin today's study, briefly review the main points of last week's lesson. Review the following:

- What is a disciple of Christ?
- What does it mean to follow Christ?
- How did Jesus call the four disciples in Matthew 4:18-22?
- What is a "fisher of men"?
- What is disciple-making?
- What is the only lasting fruit of a true disciple's life?

Key Study / 35 minutes

Have students open their Bibles to John 1:29-51. As you begin the study time in God's Word, pray that God would make the entire class receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group today as you discuss His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the class into all truth (John 16:13) so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person's life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today (James 1:22).

Using the commentary, explain to the group that the core of being a disciple of Christ is believing that Jesus is who He says He is. Refer back to last week's lesson in Matthew 4:18-22 to illustrate this point. Those four men left everything to follow Christ because they believed in Him.

Observation / What does the Scripture say?

Explain to the group that this week you are going to split them into three groups to examine the key passage. Before you split them up, read (or have a student read) John 1:29-51 aloud to the whole group. Using the commentary, explain to the group that this passage is the Gospel of John's account of the same passage we studied last week. Instruct them that the versions focus on different details of the same event and do not contradict each other. Then, give each student the handout and assign each group one set of questions.

Instruct them to answer the questions that correspond to their assigned passage. Give them about 5-10 minutes in their groups and then bring them back together. Lead a discussion through the questions using the lesson commentary and allowing

each group to share what they learned from their assigned passage.

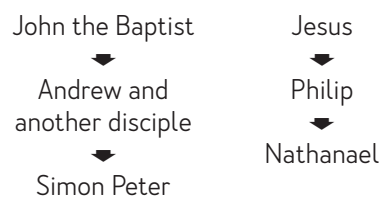
Note to facilitators: Student worksheets for this portion of the teaching are included at the end of this lesson. These three groups can be as many as 10-15 people or even just one person, depending on the overall size of your Small Group.

Interpretation / What does the Scripture mean?

As you have each group share their answers, lead the group in a discussion of the implications of each passage using the following questions (along with the questions on the student worksheet). Make sure to stress intentionality of disciple-making and how we see it in each of these passages.

- How is faith the foundation of each of these men telling others about Christ?
- How do we see their intentionality to tell others?
- Who are they telling? Is it strangers or people they already know?
- How quickly did they tell others? Did they wait until they understood everything about Christ?

Using the commentary, explain to the group that we are now going to examine some of the implications of what we see in this passage. Using a white board or poster board, illustrate the progression of those coming to Christ on the board. Your illustration may look something like this:



Explain that each man (with the exception of John the Baptist) went and told just one other person about who they believed Jesus to be. Explain that none of these men (except Jesus) could have possibly known how far-reaching their decision to tell others about Christ would be.

Have your students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 16:13-18. Have a student read the verses aloud to the group. Using the commentary, explain the context of these verses and lead the group in a discussion using the following questions:

- In verse 16, what is Simon Peter's confession?

- How does Jesus respond to this confession? What does He say in verse 18?
- As a reminder, who was it that first told Peter about Jesus according to John 1?
- Do you think Andrew knew Christ would build His church on Peter's confession?

Now, lead your group to see how Christ brought this to pass in Peter's life. Have them turn in their Bibles to Acts 2:14 and read the verse aloud. Using the commentary, explain to the group that this is Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Have a student read Acts 2:41 aloud and then ask the following questions.

- How many people were saved as a result of Peter's sermon?
- Who all do we know from our study today had a part in these 3,000 people coming to faith in Christ?
- Just based on what we've seen in Scripture today, how many people came to faith in Christ as a result of John the Baptist sharing His faith in Christ with just two men?
- John the Baptist was dead by the time Pentecost occurred. Do you think he ever could have imagined the lasting fruit of his ministry?

Application / How will this Truth change me?

Using the commentary, review with your group that each of these men became disciple-makers by intentionally telling others who they had become convinced Christ was. Remind them that they didn't wait to do it until they arrived at some level of maturity—it was immediate. Point out that our mission as disciples is to take people to the person of Christ by telling them who we know Him to be. Stress that our lives are how He lives today on earth. He lives in and through us.

Have the group turn in their Bibles to John 4:34-36. Read the verses aloud and ask the following questions:

- What does Jesus instruct His disciples to do in verse 35?
- What is Jesus referring to when He says the "fields are ripe for harvest"? What harvest?
- Are the fields still ripe today?
- How do we as believers today close our eyes to the fields?
- What are some ways that we can open our eyes?

Now have your group turn in their Bibles to Matthew 9:37-38 and read it aloud. Ask the following questions.

- How does Jesus describe the harvest and its

workers in these verses?

- What are we instructed to do about this problem in verse 38?

Using the commentary, lead your group in a discussion about how God provides workers for the harvest. They will come through us, His church, as we multiply ourselves in the lives of others. First, we must decide if we really believe He is who He says He is. We must open our eyes and look at the fields. Then comes the choice: Will we tell others? Will we share the Word?

Close your time together by spending a few moments allowing each student to think about his/her own life. If they haven't placed their faith in Christ, invite them to do so now or come and talk to you after you are finished or at another time. Have those who have believed pray silently that God would bring to their mind just one person they know who doesn't believe in Christ. Have them pray for this person, and encourage them to be intentional this week to share Christ with them. End your time by praying with the group.

LESSON 3: SHOW THE WORD

Key Scriptures: John 14:9-10, 25-26; John 16:12-15; Matthew 4:23-25; John 17

Memory Verse: *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name—the name You gave Me—so that they may be one as we are one." John 17:11*

Review

In lesson 2, we concentrated on the first component of disciple-making, which is sharing the Word with others. We saw in John 1:29-51 that the foundation of being Christ's disciple is faith in the person of Jesus Christ. We further saw how this belief compelled John the Baptist, Andrew and Phillip to share the Word with others. In the same way, our belief in the person of Jesus Christ should compel us to share the Word with others, which is the first step in disciple-making. This week, we will study another component of disciple-making: showing the Word.

A Prayer of Jesus

The accompanying message in worship this week will be from John 17, which is a continuation of the study of Jesus' prayer for His disciples before He died on the cross, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven. In verse 9, Jesus says specifically that He "is not praying for the world, but for those You [God] have given Me." Notice that this prayer is not for those who don't believe in Jesus, but for those who do believe. It is for those who already belong to God according to verse 9.

Why is this? 2 Peter 3:9 says that God doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. So why does Jesus spend this time praying for those who already believe in Him?

Verse 10 helps to answer this question. In it Jesus says that He will not physically remain in the world, but His disciples will. How will others come to faith after He is gone? The answer is by His disciples continuing His ministry on earth. That is why Jesus is praying for them specifically. His disciples will manifest (show, make evident) Him on earth, as Jesus has manifested the Father on earth.

The Implications

Instead of spending the majority of our group time on John 17, we are going to spend our time looking at the

implications of Jesus' prayer for His disciples. What are the implications of His followers remaining on earth and manifesting Christ? How does this relate to disciple-making? And what does this mean for us today?

After Jesus

It is evident by Jesus' prayer for His disciples that He expects them to continue His ministry of making disciples after He leaves the earth. As they begin to imitate what they learned as His disciples, many will come to faith in Christ. And as they lead others to imitate Christ through disciple-making, the life of Christ will continue in future generations.

Christ will physically leave the earth, but His presence will remain through His disciples, and through their disciples, and through their disciples, etc. They will be Christ's face on the earth. They will share His words with the lost. They will show the Word to the world. 2 Corinthians 5:20 communicates this truth. It says, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Ambassadors...

...think about that illustration. An ambassador is a representative in a foreign place. U.S. Ambassadors represent America on foreign soil. This is how the Bible describes Christ's followers. We are His representatives on earth, His presence in the world. How does this look practically in our lives? Remember that a disciple is a lifelong learner and follower of Christ. We simply learn how Christ lived and imitate Him.

This is what the twelve disciples did. They had spent three years being with Christ, learning from Him, and ministering to others with Him. They would now be His ambassadors by imitating His character. At the same time, they would make disciples by intentionally leading others. This applies to all who follow Christ. We are His ambassadors, and He makes His appeal through our lives—be reconciled to God. We, too, must imitate His character.

Jesus Himself modeled this for us while He was on the earth. Jesus was God's ambassador. The purpose of His life was to show people the way to God. God made His appeal through Christ—be reconciled to Me. The following passage shows us how Christ manifested God through His life on earth.

John 14:9-14

In these verses, Jesus tells His disciples that anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father. In verse 10 Jesus says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." He goes on to say that the words He speaks are not His own, but rather it is the Father "living in Me who is doing His work." In verse 12, Jesus says that anyone who has faith in Him will "do what I have been doing."

In this passage we see a striking similarity between how Jesus lived while on earth, and how His disciples will live after He leaves the earth. Jesus says that the Father is in Him, that He is speaking the Father's words, and that the Father works through His life. For three years the disciples have seen Jesus being obedient to the Father by sharing the Word and showing the Word. They have seen His dependence upon the Father in order to accomplish His will.

In verse 12, Jesus says that anyone who has faith should imitate His life by doing what He has been doing. In verses 13-14, Jesus says that He will do anything they ask in His name in order to bring glory to the Father. Just as God has done His work through Christ while He was on earth, now Christ will do His work through His disciples who will remain on earth after He is physically gone. All of this is in order to bring glory to God the Father.

John 14:25-26

In these verses Jesus tells His disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to them after Jesus leaves them to teach them all things and remind them of everything He has said.

John 16:12-15

Jesus shares more with His disciples about the coming Holy Spirit in these verses. He tells them that the Spirit will guide them into all truth and speak only what He hears from the Father to them. The Holy Spirit will take what is Christ's and make it known to the disciples.

Just as God revealed Himself to the disciples through the life of Christ (John 17:6), now the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ to the world through the disciples' lives.

The disciples have spent three years in an attitude of observation, study, obedience, and imitation of Jesus. As they saw Him, they saw the Father. Jesus was revealing the glory of God to them in the way He lived. Now, they would be His witnesses on earth

after He is gone. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells His disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and will be His witnesses all over the world. The Greek meaning of the word "witness" in this verse literally means to be a witness unto death, or a martyr [Strong's #3459]. Isn't that what they have seen in the life of Christ? A devotion to the will of the Father so strong that He died on the cross?

How Great Is the Commitment?

So how will they be His witnesses on earth? By imitating His life. This means not only sharing the Word with words, but also showing the Word with their deeds. Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Matthew 4:23-25

How did Christ show the Word? By meeting the physical needs of those He came to save. Throughout the four Gospels we see time after time where Jesus had compassion on the sick and healed diseases and cast out demons. Matthew 4:23-25 is one example of this as we see Jesus demonstrating His love and power as He physically extends mercy to the needy. Verse 23 begins, "Jesus was going throughout Galilee... teaching... proclaiming... healing."

Jesus was going. He wasn't waiting for the sick to come to Him. It was only after He began going that people began coming to Him for healing. News about Him traveled fast to areas as far as Jerusalem and Syria. Those who were suffering began to come to find Him, hoping to be healed.

Extending Grace and Mercy

Jesus wasn't known only as a teacher, but also as a healer. In order to imitate Him and show the Word, His disciples would have to extend the same grace and mercy to the hurting people around them. One cannot call himself a disciple of Christ and ignore the needs of the world. As Jesus shared the Word, He showed the Word. We must do the same.

Jesus' main priority was to share the Gospel with everyone He encountered. But we learn something so important in this passage as He deals with the sick. In order to effectively share the Word, He knew He had to meet their physical needs. This is how He showed the Word.

Looking at Jesus' Example

Below are many more examples of Jesus showing

the Word during His ministry. Remember that His disciples lived life alongside Him and saw many of these events firsthand.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ■ Matthew 9:35 | ■ Mark 2:15-17 |
| ■ Matthew 14:14 | ■ Mark 3:10-11 |
| ■ Matthew 15:32 | ■ Matthew 20:34 |
| ■ Luke 4:40 | ■ Luke 5:15 |
| ■ Mark 1:32-34 | ■ Luke 9:11 |
| ■ Mark 1:40-42 | |

We Must Go

Note that in several of these verses the word “compassion” is used to describe how Jesus felt when He saw the hurt, poverty, distress and oppression of people. This compassion compelled Him to act. As disciples of Christ, we must choose to see the needs of those around us. We cannot see if we do not go. Matthew 4:23 tells us that Christ was “going.” As we imitate His life and go, we will see needs. We will see needs in our own neighborhoods and city; and we will see needs on the other side of the world. The compassion we feel will compel us to show the Word, just as Christ did.

Brought to Jesus

Notice also how many times the Scripture says that people were brought to Jesus to be healed, or came to Jesus to be healed. Luke 5:15 and Luke 9:11 even say that people came to hear Jesus teach and to be healed. Jesus was known for His compassion. At the beginning of His ministry in Matthew 4 we see Jesus going and seeking out people to serve. But as time goes on, we see people coming to Him, seeking Him out.

Today we are Christ’s presence on earth. Are His followers today known for their compassion? How incredible would it be for the lost and hurting to begin seeking out believers because of our reputation for being compassionate. What a picture of Christ that would be!

James 2:14-19

This passage is such a challenge to those of us who call ourselves Christians. In these verses God asks us the question, “What good is it to say you have faith in Me if your life does not show that you have faith in Me?” To call ourselves Christians (which literally means “little Christ”) and ignore the needs of those around us is not biblical, and it is not Christlike. Throughout His life we see Jesus not only telling others about God, but showing them the character of God. Since we remain on earth as His ambassadors, this is now our mission. Not only to tell others about Christ, but to show others His character with our

lives.

James 2:18 says, “I will show you my faith by what I do.” As we saw in the verses above, Jesus taught His disciples by word and deed. When the Holy Spirit came upon them they received the power to do the same. Throughout the New Testament we see them being Christ’s witnesses through sharing and showing the Word in the same ways that Jesus did—even to the point of death.

The second component of disciple-making is to show the Word.

If we are going to be disciple-makers, we must follow this example as well. We must share the Gospel not only in word, but in deed, by caring for the hurting. As we love and serve others with a heart of compassion, they will see Christ in us. As Christ is manifested through us, people will come to faith in Christ. And like Christ, we must intentionally lead others to do the same.

TEACHING [This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.]

Opening Activity / 5-10 minutes

Choose one of the following activities to do with your group before you begin discussing this week’s lesson.

Option 1: Charades

Prior to your group time, write the following phrases on strips of paper, fold them, and place them in a bowl...

- “Where there is smoke there is fire.”
- Book Title: The Wizard of Oz
- Movie Title: Guardians of the Galaxy
- Song Title: Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head

Ask for a student to volunteer to come and draw a phrase out of the bowl and act it out for the group. You can give small prizes (like candy) to the first student to guess each phrase if you wish. Repeat several times with different students acting out the phrases.

Explain to the group that today we are going to look at how Jesus showed the Word to His disciples with His life. Just like charades, our lives should show the character of Christ so that when people see our example, they see Christ.

Option 2: A World in Need

Share the following statistics [taken from the World Health Organization] with the group:

- 11 million children die each year from malnutrition and preventable diseases
- In 2002 alone, 11 million people died of infectious diseases
- Tuberculosis kills 1.75 million people each year
- 40 million people were living with AIDS in 2005
- 3.1 million people died of AIDS in 2005
- 3.8 million people are diagnosed with tuberculosis each year
- 1 million die of malaria each year
- 3,000 children die from malaria each day in Africa
- More than a half-million people died from the measles in 2003
- 600,000 people die from typhoid each year

After sharing these statistics, lead a very short discussion with the group about how many of these diseases we have vaccines for in the U.S. Discuss the tragedy of so many people dying from diseases that are so easily treated in America. Point out that 1 billion people worldwide have no access to health care [according to the World Health Organization]. Have the group share information they know about what is being done about these conditions and by whom. Chances are, celebrity names will be mentioned such as Angelina Jolie, Oprah Winfrey, etc. Discuss what is being done.

Next, share these statistics [by The Joshua Project]:

- The current world population is 7.2 billion people.
- Of this 7.2 billion, about 65% have never heard the Gospel of Jesus. Over 70,000 people die every day without knowing about Jesus.
- Christians make up 33% of the world's population, but receive 53% of the world's annual income and spend 98% of it on themselves.

Consider how paying attention and caring for the needs represented in the world health statistics above can lead to opportunities to share the love of Christ with billions who have never heard His name.

Review / 5 minutes

Share with your group that today we will continue our study of disciple-making. Briefly review the main points of the last 2 weeks to refresh their memories. Some possible review questions are:

- What does it mean to be Christ's disciple?
- What is disciple-making?
- What is the foundation of disciple-making that we studied last week?

- How did we see "sharing the Word" illustrated in last week's key Scripture [John 1:29-51]?

Key Study / 35 minutes

Have students open their Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5:20. As you begin your study time in God's Word, pray that God would make the entire class receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group today as you discuss His word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the class into all truth [John 16:13] so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person's life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today [James 1:22].

Opening the Word

Have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:20 aloud to the group. You may even want to write this verse on a white-board before class begins. Using the commentary portion of the lesson, spend a few minutes re-teaching the background for the lesson today. Explain the implication of Jesus praying for His disciples in John 17, especially verse 11 when Jesus says that He will no longer remain on the earth, but His disciples will.

Beyond Sharing to Showing...

Help the group to understand how this prayer demonstrates the disciples' responsibility to imitate Christ's life to the world. Explain that this means not only sharing the Word, as we studied last week, but also showing the Word, which we will study this week. You do not have to cover all of the background information from the commentary section. The goal here is to help the group understand that Jesus expected His disciples to manifest His presence on the earth after He ascended into heaven. We, too, are Christ's ambassadors.

Observation / What does the Scripture say?

Have the group turn in their Bibles to John 14:9-14 and have someone read it aloud. Using the commentary portion of the lesson and the following questions, lead the students to observe these verses.

- According to verse 9, if the disciples have seen Jesus, who else have they seen?
- According to verse 10, whose words had Jesus been teaching? Who had been working through His life?
- What is Jesus' command to the disciples in verse 12?
- What does Jesus promise in verses 13-14?
- How do these verses show that Jesus was God's ambassador?

Now have the group turn to John 14:25-26 and have someone read these verses. Have them flip to John 16:12-15 and have someone read these verses aloud. Using the commentary portion of the lesson and the following questions, lead the students to observe these verses.

- What will the Holy Spirit do in the lives of the disciples according to John 14:26?
- Who will send the Holy Spirit? In Whose name will He come?
- According to John 16:12-15, Whose words will the Holy Spirit speak to the disciples? What will He make known to them?

A Witness

Read Acts 1:8 to the group and explain that the Holy Spirit would bring God's power into the lives of the disciples so that they could imitate the life of Christ and lead others to do the same. Explain what it means to be Christ's "witness" according to the Greek definition located in the commentary section of the lesson. Lead them in a brief discussion about how Christ modeled this for the disciples with His life. You may use the following questions to facilitate discussion.

- God revealed Himself to the disciples through the life of Jesus. How does this model for the disciples show how they are to live after Jesus physically leaves the earth?
- What are some ways that Jesus revealed God to the disciples?
- What are some ways that Christ's disciples reveal Him to the world?
- How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives enable us to imitate Christ and show the Word?
- How did Jesus' life demonstrate Acts 1:8 and the definition of "witness?"

Imitating Christ

Share Ephesians 5:1-2 with the group. Explain that Christ's life shows us the character of God. So by imitating Christ, we imitate God. Explain that we will spend the rest of the group time looking at how Christ not only shared the Word verbally [which we studied last week], but also showed the Word physically, which is the second component of disciple-making.

Turn to Matthew 4:23-25 and have a student read the verses aloud. Lead the students in a discussion of these verses:

- How do these verses illustrate both sharing the Word and showing the Word?

- How does verse 23 begin? What action did Jesus take? How does this model intentionality?
- What happened as a result of His action in verse 24?

Interpretation / What does the Scripture mean?

Before your group time begins, assign the following verses for students to read during this portion of the lesson. You do not have to cover all of them if time doesn't permit. You may want to write each verse on a strip of paper and hand them out at the beginning of your discussion time, instructing the students to look them up and mark their places ahead of time.

Have the students take turns reading the verses aloud to the group. It is not necessary for everyone to turn to each verse. Before they begin, explain that these verses give us a picture of how Christ showed the Word throughout His life. Remind them that the disciples witnessed this firsthand.

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| ■ Matthew 9:35 | ■ Mark 2:15-17 |
| ■ Matthew 14:14 | ■ Mark 3:10-11 |
| ■ Matthew 15:32 | ■ Matthew 20:34 |
| ■ Luke 4:40 | ■ Luke 5:15 |
| ■ Mark 1:32-34 | ■ Luke 9:11 |
| ■ Mark 1:40-42 | |

Using the commentary portion of the lesson, lead the class in a discussion about how Christ showed the Word to the world and especially to His disciples. Point out that He chose to seek out the needs of others, and this resulted in crowds coming to Him to be taught and to be healed. More importantly, the disciples were watching Jesus, seeing His ministry to the people around Him, and learning from Him how to do what He did.

Discuss how these verses demonstrate His reputation for having compassion on people. Ask the following questions:

- If we say we follow Christ, is it our responsibility as well to imitate His life? Why or why not?
- How can we imitate Christ and show the Word to the world around us?
- Do you think Christians today are known for their compassion? If not, what are they known for in the world?
- How will our lives change if we make it our mission to imitate Christ by sharing the Word and showing the Word?
- The first step in Jesus showing the Word, according to Matthew 4:23-25, was Him "going" and seeing the needs of others. How can we be intentional about seeing the needs in the world around us?

- If we are not showing the Word with our lives, can we multiply true disciples of Christ with our lives? Why or why not?
- How does showing the Word to the world around us also give us the opportunity to show the Word in a more personal way to those we are discipling?

Application / How will this Truth change me?

Have the group turn to James 2:14-19 and have someone read it aloud. Discuss the passage together.

- What question is asked in verse 14?
- How is this point illustrated in verses 15-16?
- How did Christ's life model verse 18 for His disciples?
- What is the challenge for those who call themselves Christians in this passage?
- This passage is not saying that our works save us. It is, however, describing how saving faith will be demonstrated in the life of a true disciple of Christ. How will saving faith be displayed in our lives?
- How does this description of faith relate to the Ephesians 5:1-2 command to imitate Christ with a life of love?
- How does this description of faith compare with the lives of those who call themselves Christians today? Do the two measure up?

A Challenge

Close your time together by encouraging your group members to examine their own lives in light of today's key Scripture. Challenge them to ask themselves the questions, "Am I showing the Word by imitating the character of Christ to the world? Am I choosing to see the needs of those around me? Am I intentionally going outside of my comfort zone so that I can see those needs? How can I personally meet the needs around me?"

Remind your group that Jesus showed compassion to the crowds as an example for his disciples. While He was showing the Word to the multitudes, His real focus was on the few men who surrounded Him on a day-by-day basis. These few men were at the heart of his disciple-making strategy. To reinforce and apply this truth in your students' lives, hand out index cards or paper to each group member.

Tell them to write down the names of 3-5 people that are within their spheres of influence. This can include people they work with, friends, neighbors, family members, etc. Encourage them to ask themselves the questions, "Am I showing the Word by imitating Christ to these people that I just listed? Am I intentionally

sharing and showing the Word to them? Am I intentionally sharing and showing the Word to the world so that these few people see the Word in me?" Remind them that God has placed these people in their lives for a reason. In the same way that Jesus manifested God to the disciples, Christ wants to manifest Himself through each of us to those He has placed in our spheres of influence.

Challenge them to begin to pray specifically for the people they wrote down, and to pray that they would begin to recognize and use the opportunities and influence God has given them for His glory. As we intentionally show the Word to the people in our sphere of influence, we are beginning to participate in disciple-making!

Pray with your group as you close your time together.

LESSON 4:

TEACH THE WORD

Key Scriptures: John 17:13-17; Matthew 13:23, 34-36; Mark 10:17-34; Matthew 24:1-14; John 11:1-44

Memory Verse: “I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.” John 17:14

Review

For the past three weeks we have been studying what it means to follow Jesus, to be His disciple and how following Him results in disciple-making. The foundation of being Christ’s disciple is belief in the person of Jesus Christ—that He is who He says He is. This belief compels us to multiply ourselves through Christ’s method of disciple-making by sharing the Word with others. Last week we looked at how Christ not only shared the Word verbally, but showed the Word physically. This week we are going to study the next component of disciple-making; teaching the Word.

Disciple-making progression: Sharing the Word, Showing the Word, Teaching the Word.

In John 17:13-17, Jesus continues His prayer for His disciples. In verse 13, Jesus acknowledges to the Father that He will be coming to Him (God) soon. Jesus says in verse 14 that He has given the disciples God’s Word. How has Jesus given the disciples God’s Word? He has shared the Word and showed the Word to them. This week we will see how Jesus teaches the Word.

Not of the World

In verse 15 Jesus prays that God would protect the disciples from the evil one (Satan). He acknowledges in verse 16 that the world hates the disciples because they are no longer of the world. Why are they no longer of the world? Because they have followed Christ and become His disciples. They are now set apart for a higher purpose—the God-given purpose to make disciples of all nations.

Set Apart

Notice their identification with Christ in verse 16. In the same way that Christ is not of the world, neither are they. In verse 17, Jesus asks the Father to sanctify the disciples by the truth. The word sanctify in the Greek means to set apart; to make holy. Jesus goes on to say that “Your Word is truth.”

Jesus has given the disciples God’s Word. The Word sanctifies them or sets them apart from the world. In turn, the world now hates them because they are no longer of the world. Since God’s Word has been given to them, they are now responsible to teach it to others, despite the cost. This is why Jesus is praying for them. He knows the cost of obedience.

Now We Have the Responsibility

This truth has huge implications in our lives today as disciples of Christ and as disciple-makers. If we have repented of our sins and placed our faith in Christ, we too are no longer of the world. We have been set apart, made holy. We are sanctified by the truth just as the disciples were. We have been given the Word, just as Christ gave the Word to the disciples. We are now responsible to teach this Word to others. Not only do we share the Word and show the Word; we teach the Word.

Beyond a Classroom

It is especially important here that we see disciple-making go from accidental to intentional. With Christ, class was always in session. His life was the class. As the disciples observed Him (showing the Word) they also listened to His words (teaching the Word). True disciple-making cannot occur in a classroom setting one hour each week. It will happen as we live daily with the intentional purpose to reproduce ourselves in the lives of others. This will move us from being self-centered Christians to God-centered disciples of Christ. What God teaches us will no longer be only for us, but also for the benefit of the disciples God has entrusted to us.

Taking a Tour

In today’s lesson, we will be taking a tour of the Gospels to see how Christ created “teaching opportunities” out of both large and small events in His life. From raising the dead, to parables, to common conversation, Jesus was always teaching His disciples. Observe as you study today that Jesus’ teaching was always more than verbal—it was training—instruction by word and example.

See the Examples

What follows are four examples of these teaching opportunities from the Gospels. This week we want to observe the Scripture from the perspective of the disciples. As you prepare and lead your group, continually be asking yourself and your students the questions, “What was this event like for the disciples? What were they learning from Jesus by what they saw and heard?”

The key this week is to help your group understand that Jesus took every opportunity to teach His disciples. They constantly benefited from His ministry to others because as He showed the Word to others, He taught the Word to them. It will be helpful for you to read each passage before you read the commentary for it. During your teaching time you will be breaking the class into smaller groups and assigning each group one of these examples to read, examine and discuss. Then you will bring the groups back together to share what they learned. The commentary will be helpful as you facilitate discussion as each group shares.

A student handout is provided for each of the events listed below at the end of this lesson. You can print the pages and cut out the section for each group of 2-3 people. Even if you do not typically do small group discussion within your group, we ask that you do so at least this one time—this lesson is formulated for students to discover these truths from the Word themselves through this interaction. If you are studying on your own, make notes as you follow the handout for each event.

Each example is listed by the event that occurred, what Jesus taught the disciples through this event and the Scripture reference.

Event: The Parables
Teaching: Mysteries of God Revealed
Matthew 13:1-51

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus teaching the crowds with parables. What we want to focus on in this passage is how Jesus uses parables to teach the Word to His disciples. As we examine this passage from the perspective of the disciples, what do we learn?

First, we see that Jesus told the parables to large crowds but He only explained the full meaning of these parables to His disciples. Verse 2 says that such a large crowd gathered around Jesus that He got in a boat to teach while they stood on the shore. Verse 3 goes on to say that He told the crowd “many things in parables.”

Verse 10 tells us that the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why He taught the crowd in parables. In verses 11-17 we see Jesus intentionally teaching the Word to His disciples in a different way than He taught the crowd. He uses their question about parables to explain the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Then in verse 16 Jesus begins to teach His disciples that they are blessed because God’s Word has been revealed to them. Many righteous men have longed to understand the truths that Christ is revealing to them. The mysteries of God are being entrusted to the disciples. They are not just being told parables like everyone else; they are being taught God’s Word. Notice how this relates back to Jesus’ prayer in John 17:14 when Jesus says He has “given them Your Word.” It is this Word that sanctifies them.

We further see the distinction in how the disciples are taught in verses 18-23 as Jesus explains to the disciples what the parable means. Do not miss the intentionality of Christ in this passage. He shares the Word with the crowd by telling the parable. Then He maximizes the opportunity to teach the Word to His disciples when they question Him in verse 10. Notice that they did not ask Him what the parable meant. They asked Him why He speaks in parables. This question leads to a lesson about the treasure that is being entrusted to them. Then He explains the meaning of the parable.

Throughout the rest of chapter 13, we see Jesus telling many parables to the crowds. As we skip down to verses 34-36, we again see Jesus teaching the Word to the disciples as they question Jesus in private about the meaning of the parable of the weeds in the field. In verses 37-43, Jesus explains the meaning to His disciples. Verse 51 further illustrates Jesus’ intentionality as He asks the disciples the question, “Have you understood all these things?” He did not want the disciples to merely hear the Word; He wanted to make sure that they understood so that they could teach the Word to others. It was in these times after the crowds scattered that the disciples had the opportunity to ask questions. Christ recognized these times as precious opportunities to teach the Word.

Event: The Rich Young Ruler
Teaching: Eternal Life
Mark 10:17-34

You may have heard the story of the rich young ruler contained in the beginning of this passage. Again, we want our focus today to be on how this event played out in the lives of the disciples. In verse 17 a man comes to Jesus and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. In verses 18-22, Jesus has a conversation with this man about God’s commandments and what he lacks. Jesus instructs him to go and sell all of his possessions and give the money to the poor, then he

will have treasure in heaven. Verse 22 tells us that the man went away sad because he had great wealth.

Notice the intentionality of Jesus' instruction to this man. Beginning in verse 23, Jesus begins to teach His disciples about how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. In verse 26, the disciples begin to question who can be saved. This leads to a lesson in verses 27-31 about the cost and blessing of eternal life. In verse 30, Jesus promises both blessing and persecution in the present age and eternal life in the age to come.

Then, in verse 32, we again see Jesus take the disciples to the side to teach them. This time Jesus begins to share with them what is to come—His betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection. Notice how Jesus is revealing the mystery of God's will to these men. What started out as a conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler, has now become an intimate moment of revelation in the lives of the disciples.

Event: Preaching at the Temple
Teaching: Signs of the End of the Age
Matthew 24:1-14

This passage picks up after Jesus has been preaching to His disciples and the crowds at the Temple (Matthew 23). Chapter 24 begins by telling us in verse 1 that Jesus is leaving the temple when His disciples come to Him to call His attention to the buildings. Mark 13:1 describes the same event by saying that the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

In this passage, Jesus uses their fascination with the temple as an opportunity to teach the Word. In verse 2 He tells them that not one stone of the temple will be left standing. Naturally, the disciples question Jesus in verse 3. They want to know when and what will be the sign of His coming at the end of the age.

In verses 4-14, Jesus begins to teach the disciples about the signs that will come. In verse 9, Jesus teaches His disciples that they will be persecuted, hated by all nations, and even killed because of Christ. Remember what we studied last week about the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples and bringing them power to be Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8)? We learned last week that the Greek definition of "witnesses" in this verse is to testify unto death; to martyr.

What began as a conversation about architecture has now become Christ teaching and preparing His

disciples for what lies ahead. He is again revealing the mystery of God's will to them in a distinctive way. In verses 10-13, Jesus tells them that many will turn away from the faith in the face of the persecution and suffering to come, but those who endure to the end will be saved. Verse 14 says that the Gospel will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to the nations—the same nations that will hate them. Who will preach the Gospel to the world? How will all that Jesus is teaching the disciples make it to the entire world? Through the lives of the disciples.

Remember Jesus' prayer for their protection in John 17:13-17. He does not pray that they would be taken out of the world that will hate them according to Matthew 24:9, but that they will be protected from the evil one (John 17:14) as they surrender their lives to Christ's mission to make disciples of all nations.

Event: Raising Lazarus from the Dead
Teaching: Belief
John 11:1-44

This passage is a great example of how Jesus' disciples benefited from His showing the Word to others. This is a familiar story to many, but as we examine it from the perspective of the disciples, we can see how Christ had them in mind, even as He ministered to Lazarus and his family.

Jesus tells His disciples in verses 7-10 that they are going back to Judea to check on Lazarus. The disciples question this decision because the Jews there have been trying to kill Jesus. They are fearful to go back. In verse 11, Jesus explains that Lazarus has "fallen asleep", but He is going to "wake him up." They think Jesus means literal sleep instead of death. In verse 14, Jesus plainly tells them that Lazarus is dead.

In verse 15, Jesus says, "And for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him [Lazarus]." For the sake of the disciples, Jesus is glad He wasn't there with Lazarus when he died. Why? So that they would believe. Jesus knows that raising Lazarus from the dead will increase the faith of His disciples when they witness the miracle. They, too, will benefit from this miracle. We know from verse 16 that the disciples did go with Jesus back to Judea. Verses 17-44 tell the story of how Christ raised Lazarus from the dead.

This passage demonstrates for us that even as Christ ministered to others with miracles, His disciples were still the focus of His ministry. Everything Christ did was to reveal God's Word to His disciples.

Application

From preaching to crowds, to a conversation with a rich man, to viewing magnificent architecture, to raising the dead, Jesus was constantly teaching the Word to these twelve men. No event was too large or too small to be a teaching opportunity. So what does this mean for us today?

Lifelong Learners

As disciples, we are lifelong learners and followers of Christ. Like those twelve men who Jesus called to follow Him, class is always in session for us, too. We may not learn from the physical presence of Christ, but we learn from His Word through the Holy Spirit. Some of us also learn from people who disciple us by multiplying themselves in our lives.

Because the Word of God has been revealed to us, we have been entrusted with the mysteries of God's will. For centuries, righteous men longed to understand what Christ has revealed to us. In the same way that Jesus' disciples had a responsibility to take what He had given them and invest it in the lives of others, we have that same responsibility. As disciple-makers, our lives become a classroom to those we disciple. As we follow Christ, we intentionally teach our disciples what we learn, both verbally and physically. As we show the Word to the world, our disciples can benefit greatly from our ministry to others if we choose to maximize the teachable moments God gives us.

Jesus prayed, in John 17:17, that God would sanctify His disciples by the truth of His Word. He knew what lay ahead for them. He knew they would be hated, persecuted, and even killed because of their obedience to His mission for the Gospel to go to the ends of the earth. He had approximately three years to prepare them for this future. Knowing the cost of true discipleship, Christ took every opportunity God gave Him to teach these men. Then He prayed that the Father would protect them as they lived what they learned from Him after He left the earth.

Christ prays for us in the same way. Romans 8:34-37 says that Christ is at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for us. For His sake we face death all day long; we are considered sheep to be slaughtered according to verse 36. We will face hardship and persecution if we choose to live out this mission, but we have an advocate who has faced all of this Himself and has overcome. Therefore, as Romans 8:37 says, we are more than conquerors in all of these things.

The question for us today is whether or not we can say with Jesus, "Father, I have revealed You to those You have given me out of the world" (John 17:6). Can we say to the Father, "I have given them Your Word," as Jesus prayed in John 17:14? Since God's Word has been given to us, it is our responsibility and privilege to intentionally teach it to others. If we are followers of Jesus Christ, we are sanctified, set apart, made holy. The mysteries of God are in our care. There is a world of lost people who will benefit from the truth we have living in us. The choice is yours to make. Will you keep what you know for yourself, or will you surrender everything for the God-given mission to make disciples of all nations?

TEACHING [This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.]

Opening Activity / 5 minutes

Prior to your group time, contact a student from your class and ask them to be prepared to teach another class member how to do something simple. Examples include how to braid hair, cross stitch, paint, play an instrument, or make something. The idea for this activity is to have the student show the entire group how to do it [by doing it in front of the class], but be teaching one other class member (who is standing with him/her) as he/she does it. This will illustrate how Jesus showed the Word to crowds but explained and taught the Word to His disciples. You could do this yourself if you can't find a student to do it. At the end of the activity, ask the group who would be best equipped to teach someone else how to do the activity—the entire group, or the person who was standing with the person and getting more detailed instructions?

How Jesus Taught

Explain that today we are going to continue our study of disciple-making by looking at how Jesus taught the Word to His disciples.

Key Study / 35 minutes

As you begin your study time in God's Word, pray that God would make the entire class receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group today as you discuss His word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the class into all truth [John 16:13] so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person's life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today [James 1:22].

Using the commentary section on John 17:13-17, explain to the group our basis for study today. Make

sure to include information about John 17:14. Also define sanctification in verse 17. Explain that today we will observe the Scripture from the perspective of the disciples to see how Jesus used every opportunity to teach them the Word.

Tell your group that you will be dividing them into 4 smaller groups (adjust based on class size). Explain that each smaller group will be given one passage of Scripture and a handout with some questions. Each smaller group should select one person who is willing to speak for them to share what they learn with the entire group. Remind them to focus on each passage from the perspective of the disciples as they answer the questions.

Small Group Discussion

Lead a discussion of each passage using the handouts and allow each group leader to share what they learned. Before they begin to answer the questions, have each smaller group leader share a quick overview of their assigned passage to put the questions in context for the rest of the group. It is not necessary to cover every question listed on the handouts. Use the lesson commentary for each passage to help guide the discussion. You may even want to make lists of key points for each passage on the white board.

After each smaller group has shared, ask the following questions:

- In these passages, how did Jesus use both the common and the extraordinary to teach the Word to His disciples? How was He intentional?
- How did the disciples benefit from Christ sharing and showing the Word to others?
- Based on the passages we studied today, in what ways did Jesus' disciples learn from Him? Name as many ways as you can think of.
- What do you think it was like to be one of Christ's twelve disciples? Discuss both the benefits and the hardships.

Application / 5 minutes

Using the commentary portion of the lesson, explain to the group that as disciples of Christ today, the Word has been given to us, just as it was given to the twelve disciples. We too have been entrusted with the mysteries of Christ. We have been set apart from the world. Explain that Romans 8:34-37 teaches us that Christ intercedes for us, just as He prayed for His twelve disciples in John 17.

Lead a discussion about how what we see in the life of Jesus as a disciple-maker applies to us today. Remind

your students about the names they wrote down on the index card at the end of last week's lesson. What can we apply from these passages of Scripture that will help us be more intentional about teaching the Word to those in our spheres of influence. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion:

- Jesus considered both the ordinary and the extraordinary moments of life to be opportunities to teach His disciples. Think about your life. What are some examples of ordinary, everyday events that could be transformed into teachable moments? Include examples such as family life, career, neighbors, etc.
- Share some examples of "big" life events that God has used to conform you to Christ's image.
- How can you be intentional in these types of life events to teach others God's Word, just by how you walk through them?
- How can you be intentional as you minister to the world to teach those in your sphere of influence? How can your disciples benefit from your showing the Word to others?
- What are some practical ways that you can begin to recognize opportunities to teach the Word that you might not have noticed before?
- How does something as simple as filling out the sermon outline every Sunday provide you with a resource to teach others?
- How does learning for the purpose of teaching others change the way we learn?
- How does believing that what God teaches us is not only for us to change the way we view our salvation? How does it change the way we view people? How does it change the way we view ourselves?

Close your time together by praying for your group.

Small Group Relationships and Teaching

As a reminder, the very Small Group you are facilitating provides ongoing opportunities to teach the Word by speaking and example. The relationships you and others build within and beyond your Small Group give you opportunities to put teaching the Word into practice every week.

The Reteaching Guide

We have made available a simple Reteaching Guide, which explains how to take a lesson—like this Small Group lesson or a Sunday sermon—and study and reteach it to others during the week. Free copies of the Reteaching Guide are online as a PDF download at crosspointchurch.com/reteach.

Student Handout / Group 1

Read Matthew 13:1-23 and answer the following questions:

- According to verse 2, describe the size of Jesus' audience for this sermon.
- What is the disciples' question to Jesus in verse 10?
- What is His answer in verses 11-15?
- What does Jesus tell His disciples has been given to them in verse 11?
- Because this has been given to them, how does Jesus describe them in verses 16-17?
- What does Jesus do for His disciples in verses 18-23 that He didn't do for the crowds concerning the parable of the sower?

In verses 24-33, Jesus continues to teach the crowds in parables. Skip down and read Matthew 13:34-36, and answer the following questions:

- What question do the disciples again ask Jesus in verse 37?
- Where does this occur? Is it in public?
- According to verse 37, does Jesus answer their question?

In verses 44-50, Jesus continues to teach in parables. Skip down and read verse 51 and answer the following questions:

- What does Jesus ask His disciples in this verse?
- In this passage, what difference do you see in how Jesus taught the crowds, and how He taught His disciples?
- Did His disciples hear the parables as Jesus taught the crowds? How do you know? (Hint: The questions they asked Him in private).
- If they heard the parables along with the crowds, why do you think Jesus explained their meaning in more detail to the disciples?
- Put yourselves in the place of the disciples. Describe the event from their perspective. What did they see, hear, learn, etc. from just being with Christ in this passage?
- How does this passage show Jesus' intentionality in teaching the Word to His disciples?

Student Handout/ Group 2

Read Mark 10:17-34 and answer the following questions:

- Describe what transpires in verses 17-22.
- Who was with Jesus when this conversation occurred according to verse 23?
- What does Jesus say to His disciples in verses 23-25?

- What is the disciples' reaction to this statement in verse 26?
- What truth does Jesus teach His disciples in verses 27-31?
- What does Jesus do in verse 32?
- What did Jesus share with His disciples in verses 33-34?
- Why do you think Jesus took the Twelve aside to share these things with them?
- What does that tell you about His relationship with His disciples?
- Put yourselves in the place of the disciples. Describe the event from their perspective. What did they see, hear, learn, etc. from just being with Christ in this passage?
- How does this passage show Jesus' intentionality in teaching the Word to His disciples?

Student Handout / Group 3

Read Matthew 24:1-14 and answer the following questions:

- What do the disciples point out to Jesus in verse 1? (It might be helpful for you to read Mark 13:1, which gives a more detailed account of this verse.)
- How does Jesus answer them in verse 2?
- What questions does Jesus' statement bring from the disciples in verse 3?
- Describe Jesus' answer in verses 4-14. Make sure to include what you learn from verse 9.
- What does Jesus say will happen in verse 14? How will verse 14 be fulfilled after Christ returns to heaven? Who will carry on His ministry of the Gospel?
- Why do you think Jesus shares the details of the end of the age with His disciples? Why do they need to know? How does this relate to the previous question?
- Put yourselves in the place of the disciples. Describe the event from their perspective. What did they see, hear, learn, etc. from just being with Christ in this passage?
- How does this passage show Jesus' intentionality in teaching the Word to His disciples? They began talking about the architecture of the temple. How does Jesus create a teaching opportunity from this conversation?

Student Handout / Group 4

Read John 11:1-44 and answer the following questions:

- What does Jesus say about Lazarus' sickness in verse 4? Why is he sick?
- What does verse 5 tell us how Jesus felt about Lazarus and his sisters?
- Even though Jesus loved him, what does verse 6 say Jesus did when He found out Lazarus was sick?
- Describe Jesus' conversation with His disciples in verses 7-16. Pay special attention to what Jesus says in verse 15.
- Compare verses 4, 6 and 15. What do you see?
- According to verse 16, did the disciples go with Jesus to see Lazarus?
- Describe what happened when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in verses 21-44.
- How does Jesus describe Himself to Martha in verses 25-26?
- What question do the Jews ask in verse 37?
- Put yourselves in the place of the disciples. Describe the event from their perspective. What did they see, hear, learn, etc. from just being with Christ in this passage?
- What did Jesus mean in verse 15? How did the disciples benefit from this miracle?

LESSON 5: SERVE THE WORLD

Key Scriptures: John 17:18-26; Mark 6:7-13; Mark 6:30-44

Memory Verse: "As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18

Review

For the past four weeks, we have been studying what it means to follow Christ and be His disciple. We have seen in Scripture that everything Christ did during His ministry on earth was for the benefit of the twelve men God gave Him out of the world. Christ manifested God to these men by sharing, showing and teaching the Word to them. This week, we are going to study another component of disciple-making. We are going to see how Jesus trained His disciples to serve the world.

Sent Into the World

Read John 17:18-26. This passage is the end of Jesus' prayer to the Father on behalf of His disciples. In verse 18, Jesus says that just as God sent Him into the world, now He has sent His disciples into the world. Jesus says that it is for the sake of His disciples that He has sanctified Himself, so that they may be truly sanctified [verse 19]. Last week we learned that "sanctified" means to be set apart, or made holy.

One In Christ

Jesus goes on to pray for all those who will believe in Him through the message of the disciples. His prayer is that they will all be one through Christ so that the world may believe that God sent Him. In verse 22, Jesus says that He has given the disciples the glory that God gave Him so that they may be one. How will they be one? Verse 23 says Christ will be in the disciples as God is in Christ. Therefore, they are one.

Why is it so important to Jesus that they have complete unity? Verse 21 says, "So that the world may believe that You have sent Me." Verse 23 says, "To let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them [disciples] even as You have loved Me." In verse 25 He says, "Though the world does not know You [God], I know You, and they [disciples] know that You have sent Me."

Jesus Reveals the Father

Throughout John 17, Jesus says that He has revealed God to the disciples. Christ has given them the Word and they have accepted His message. Now, as Jesus ends His prayer, we see a shift in His focus. He is still praying for the disciples, but He is not talking as much about what He has done for them now, but about what He wants to do through them. It is here that Jesus begins to connect the blessing of their salvation with the purpose of their salvation.

Jesus has sanctified Himself for them. Because of Him, they can now be truly sanctified [verse 19]. But for what purpose? For whose sake? In verse 20, Jesus begins to pray for those who will believe in Him through their message. The disciples believed in God through Jesus' message [John 17:8]. Now, others will believe in Christ through their message. In John 17:6, Jesus says God gave Him the disciples out of the world. Jesus states in verse 25 that the world does not know God. But He also says in this same verse that the disciples do. So how will the world believe in Christ? Who will reveal God to the world after Christ leaves the earth?

Identical Purpose

The disciples' purpose is identical to the purpose of Christ. Christ revealed God to them. Now they will reveal Him to others whom God will give them out of the world. They will not only be disciples; they will make disciples. The accomplishment of Jesus' purpose in the world was dependent on the faithfulness of His disciples to this task.

What does this mean for us today? As disciples of Christ, our purpose is also the same. The accomplishment of Christ's purpose in the world today depends on our faithfulness to this mission to reveal God to those He gives us out of the world. Christ sanctified Himself so that we may truly be sanctified. We are sanctified for the sake of the world – so that they may believe in Christ. Sadly, most Christians have no more world impact for Christ after years of believing in Him than they did the day before they were saved. We have been given the glory of Christ [John 17:22], and we are commissioned to serve the world in order to reveal His glory.

Modeled and Empowered

Jesus not only modeled and taught how to serve others; He empowered His disciples to serve with Him. He trained them to serve the world. This component of disciple-making involves intentional planning and selection of opportunities; which will

allow disciples to apply the lessons they've learned. The world becomes the classroom as disciples are given the opportunity to model Christ in unique situations. As we accomplish the mission of Christ together, we experience the full joy of disciple-making.

Jesus has spent more than three years with His disciples, preparing them to be sent into the world. As we have seen, Jesus taught His disciples both verbally and physically. He taught His disciples as He showed the Word to others. Today, we are going to see how Jesus trained His disciples to serve the world. We will look at two examples from the Gospel of Mark that show how Jesus provided opportunities for His disciples to apply His teachings through "on-the-job training."

Mark 6:7-13

In this passage, Jesus commissions the twelve disciples and sends them out to serve the world. Verse 7 says that He gave them authority over evil spirits. Matthew 10 is a different account of the same event. We will be using some verses out of Matthew 10 to help us in our study. Matthew 10:1 adds that Jesus also gave them authority to heal every disease and sickness.

Authority

The word "authority" in both Mark 6:7 and Matthew 10:1 are the same Greek word *exousia*. It means, "power of choice; liberty to do as one pleases; influence; power." Jesus was giving His disciples the power and freedom to do as they pleased when it came to the demons and the sicknesses they would encounter as they served the world. It is important to note that even though the disciples were performing the miracles, it was Christ who gave them the authority to do so. Their power came from Him. They could do nothing apart from Him. His authority is at work through their lives.

Instructions for the Mission

Mark 6:8-11 contains Jesus' instructions to His disciples for their mission. He tells them to take nothing with them except a staff. This is significant because throughout the Old Testament, the staff was a symbol of God's power. We see this illustrated most clearly in the life of Moses as he leads the children of Israel out of Egypt [Exodus 7:8-20; Exodus 8:16-17; Exodus 17:3-7]. Jesus was telling His disciples that they would be successful as long as they had His authority and power.

He had given them His authority, and that is all they will need. His instructions in verse 11 tell us that there would be places where they would not be welcomed. Matthew 10:7-8 gives us another look at Jesus' instructions. He tells them to share and show the Word. Isn't that interesting? This is what He has been doing for them. Now He is giving them the opportunity while He is still on earth to go out and "practice" what they have learned.

Preaching the Message

They will preach the message that He has been preaching. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus preached, "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is near." Now in Matthew 10:7, He gives His disciples the chance to do the same as He instructs them saying, "As you go, preach this message, 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'" In Matthew 4:23, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Now in Matthew 10:8, He gives His disciples the chance to do the same as He says, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

Mark 6:12-13 says that the disciples went out and preached, drove out many demons, and healed many people. Not only did Christ teach and show them how to serve the world, He also empowered them to do the same. He intentionally gave them an opportunity to apply what they were learning from Him. And He did this while He was still physically with them on earth.

This provided them the opportunity to come back to Him and share their experiences with Him. They would be able to ask questions and receive further instruction from Him. It also provided the opportunity for Christ to share in their joy. It wasn't only Christ serving others as the disciples watched nearby. Now, they were serving together with their Lord and participating in His ministry.

Mark 6:30-44

In this passage, we again see Jesus giving His disciples an opportunity to serve the world with Him. Verse 31 says that so many people were coming and going that they didn't even have a chance to eat. Jesus calls His disciples to a quiet place so they can get some rest. But the crowd followed them. Verse 34 says that Jesus had compassion on the crowd and began to teach them. As it grows later in the day, the disciples express concern for the people to Jesus. They are in a remote place and it's getting late. The disciples tell Jesus in

verse 36 to send the people away so they can go buy something to eat.

Applying Jesus' Teaching

Verses 37-44 show us how Jesus again gives His disciples an opportunity to apply the principles that they are learning from Him. In verse 37 He says, "You give them something to eat." And then Jesus performs the famous miracle of feeding the five thousand with only five loaves of bread and two fish. Instead of focusing only on what Christ does in this passage, we are going to see what Christ instructs His disciples to do. Notice how He intentionally involves them in this work. Think about it. Jesus has the power to speak fish and loaves into existence. After all, He created the world. But what does He do instead?

First, in verse 38, He instructs the disciples to "go and see" how many loaves they have. Then, in verse 39, Jesus has the disciples organize the crowd. He doesn't do it Himself, but gives them instructions and sends them to carry out the task. In verse 41, Jesus blesses the food and then gives it to His disciples to serve the hungry crowds. Then, after everyone has eaten and is satisfied, the disciples clean up the extras in verse 43.

Again in this example, it is Christ who does the work through His disciples. He performs the miracle of multiplying the food, but His disciples participate in His ministry under His authority. In Matthew 25:34-40 Jesus taught that when you serve the "least of these" by feeding the hungry, it is as if you serve Christ Himself. Here we see Christ give His disciples a chance to apply this principle in their lives.

"I Am Sending You"

In John 20:21, Jesus appears to His disciples after His resurrection and says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." The implication of this statement in our lives today is incredible. The word "as" carries with it a mission to show the world the glory of God. Jesus says, "as the Father sent Me." That means "in the same way," or "for the same purpose." Why did God send Jesus? We have seen in John 17 that Jesus' mission was to reveal God to His twelve disciples – the ones God gave Him out of the world. The Father sent Him into the world to do this. Now Jesus says, "I am sending you."

The glory of God has been revealed to us as well. The Spirit of God lives in us and empowers us to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. It is through this

component of disciple-making that we will connect the blessing of our salvation with the purpose of our salvation. The world does not know Christ, but we do. They can come to know Him through our lives as we serve the world.

Like the examples we've studied, it is Christ who does the work through us. We are under His authority and it is His power that is at work in our lives. And like Christ, we must be intentional to provide opportunities for those we disciple to participate in our ministry to the world.

Internships

A great example of this concept is college internships. In order to earn many types of degrees today, college students are required to do an internship for one semester. The internship involves going to work in the field that the degree is in. The students work under the instruction of an experienced professional who can help them to apply what they've learned in the classroom. In many foreign language degrees, going and living for one semester in the country where the language is spoken counts as class credit.

The experience of living in an environment where one is forced to apply what he has learned is viewed as being just as valuable, if not more so, than sitting in a college classroom learning to speak the language from a book. Why? Because book knowledge can only take someone so far. It is in applying the learned principles that students begin to truly understand all that they have studied.

So why do we expect Christians to "know how" to reach the world for Christ just because they've been taught from a pulpit or in a small group? Maybe this is why we aren't reaching the world for Christ. Many have been attending Bible-teaching churches for years but have never led anyone to faith in Christ, much less disciplined anyone.

What would happen in the church if we began to surrender our lives to building relationships through disciple-making? What if we began to live out all of the principles we've been taught? What difference would it make in your life if one person took the time to invest what they know in you? What if they were intentional to provide opportunities for you to apply what you are learning? What if you began to invest in just one other person to help them learn and grow as a disciple of Christ? What if you provided opportunities for them to apply what they learn from you? What if we began to serve the world together?

As we accomplish the mission of Christ together, we too will experience the full joy of making disciples of all nations.

TEACHING [This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.]

Review / 5 minutes

Before you begin today's lesson, spend a couple of minutes reviewing the components of disciple-making that we have studied so far. They are sharing the Word, showing the Word, and teaching the Word.

Opening Activity / 5-10 minutes

Bring two suitcases or duffel bags to class. Before your group arrives, place a Bible inside one, close it, and set it aside. Leave the other suitcase open and empty. Hand out blank strips of paper to each student.

Instruct your group to imagine they are going on a long trip out of America. Ask them to write on the strip of paper one or two things they would bring with them on their trip. Explain that they will not have access to stores while they are away.

Have the students place their strips of paper in the empty suitcase. Then, pull the strips out one by one and read them aloud. Explain to the group that in today's lesson we will see how Jesus sent His disciples out to serve the world. Open the other suitcase to reveal the Bible packed inside. Explain that the Bible represents God's authority in our lives, and we will see through our study today that His power and authority has been given to us, and it is all we need to serve the world.

Key Study / 35 minutes

As you begin your study time in God's Word, pray that God would make the entire class receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group today as you discuss His word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the class into all truth [John 16:13] so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person's life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today [James 1:22].

Sent Into the World...

Begin by using the reading [first] portion of the lesson to explain to your group that just as God sent Jesus into the world, now Jesus is sending His disciples into the world [John 17:18]. Help them to understand that Christ sends us into the world in the same way. Be sure to explain how our purpose is identical to the

purpose of Christ. That purpose is to reveal the glory of God to those that God gives us out of the world.

Serve the World

Share with the group that today we will be studying another component of disciple-making. We will see how Christ gave His disciples opportunities to serve the world.

Have your group open their Bibles to Mark 6:7-13. Have a student read the passage aloud. Using the lesson commentary, lead a discussion of this passage. Questions are listed below to help you guide the discussion. Matthew 10:1-8 may also be helpful.

- What did Christ give His disciples according to verse 7?

Using the commentary, share with the group the Greek definition of “authority” in this verse.

- What did He send them out to do?
- What were His instructions to His disciples?
- According to verse 12, what did they preach?
- How did they serve the world according to verse 13?
- How were they able to accomplish these works? From whom did the power come?

Explain how this is an example of Christ giving His disciples an opportunity to apply the principles He is teaching them. Have the group turn to Matthew 4:17 and read it aloud. Now have someone read Matthew 4:23. Lead a discussion using the commentary and the following questions:

- What similarities do you see between Christ’s ministry and the ministry of the disciples in this passage?
- Where had the disciples learned to preach this message?
- Where had the disciples seen miracles performed before Christ sent them out to serve the world?
- Why do you think Christ sent the disciples out with such detailed instructions?
- Why do you think Christ sent the disciples out on their own while He was still on earth?
- Do you think this experience helped the disciples to more fully understand their purpose? Why or why not?
- How do you think serving the world in this passage changed the disciples’ own relationship with Christ? With one another? With the world?
- What do you think they might have come to understand during this experience that they never would have known without it?

Now have your group turn to Mark 6:30-44 and read the passage aloud. Using the commentary portion of the lesson and the following questions, lead your group in a discussion of these verses.

- What was Jesus’ invitation to the disciples in verse 31?
- What happened when they attempted to go away and rest?
- What was Jesus’ response to the crowd according to verse 34?
- What did the disciples ask Jesus to do in verse 35 and why?
- How did the disciples’ concern for the crowd differ from Jesus’ concern for them? How did this affect their heart to serve them?
- What did Jesus tell His disciples to do in verse 37 and what was the disciples’ response?

Involved in Serving the World

Now, going verse by verse through verses 37-44, have your students list for you all of the ways that Christ involved the disciples in serving the crowd. As they name them, make a list on the board. When you have finished, ask the following questions.

- Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples to feed the people?
- By whose power was this miracle done?
- Through whose hands was the work carried out?
- How is this a picture of how Christ works through us today?

Have a student read Matthew 25:34-40.

- What principle contained in these verses was Jesus giving His disciples the opportunity to apply?
- How might this event have helped them to more fully understand this teaching?
- How did the disciples participate in Christ’s ministry in Mark 6:30-44?

Application / How will this Truth change me?

Using the lesson commentary, lead your group in a discussion of practical examples of how “on-the-job training” is beneficial. Share the examples of internships, study abroad programs, etc. Allow group members to share any such experiences they have had and how the training they received benefited them. Then, ask the following questions.

- What difference would it make in your life as a Christ follower if someone provided opportunities for you to apply what you learn like Jesus provided for His disciples?

- How can you personally begin to make a difference in the life of someone else by applying what you've learned today?
- How will our church change if we began to serve the world together?
- How would the world change if our church began to live out the components of disciple-making that we have studied?
- What can our small group do to serve the world together?
- What can I do practically to serve the world with people God has given to me?

Have your students turn in their Bibles to John 20:21 and read it aloud to the group. Remind your group that our purpose is the same as Christ's purpose. We are sanctified for the sake of the world. It is our mission to reveal God's glory to those He gives us out of the world. As John 20:21 says, Christ has sent us to serve the world.

Close your time together by asking your group to think about how they are intentionally revealing God's glory to those God places in their lives. Challenge them to look for ways this week to give those they are discipling opportunities to apply what they are learning as they serve the world together.

LESSON 6: THE GREAT COMMISSION

Key Scriptures: *Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:19-20; Romans 8:34-37*

Memory Verse: *"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 28:19-20*

Review

For the past five weeks, we have been studying how Christ multiplied His life through disciple-making. We have seen how He spent three years intentionally pouring His life into twelve men that God gave Him out of the world. And we have seen how Christ expected these men to carry on His ministry by taking what they had learned from Him and investing themselves in the lives of others that God would give them out of the world.

The purpose of this final small-group lesson in the "Follow Me" series is to see how all of the components of disciple-making that we've studied fit together in Christ's final command to "go and make disciples of all nations" in Matthew 28:16-20. We will spend some time reviewing what we've learned for the past five weeks and then take a close look at the Great Commission to see how it contains all four of the components of disciple-making that we have studied. Finally, we will be encouraged as we see in Scripture that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, always living to make intercession for us as we give ourselves to this mission to make disciples of all nations. In the same way that He interceded for His disciples in John 17, He is interceding for us now.

We have covered a lot of Scripture throughout this series of lessons. Spending a few minutes reviewing will help your group realize how much they have learned. The review portion of the commentary is divided by week. Reviewing all five weeks together will help us to see how the components of disciple-making fit together. They are not exclusive, but build on one another.

Lesson One: Follow Me

In this lesson, we studied Jesus' call to His first four disciples. He said, *"Follow Me, and I will make you*

fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). This call to follow Him required complete obedience. There is a high cost involved, and His disciples must be willing to surrender their lives to His mission. We defined "disciple of Christ" as: A lifelong learner and follower of Jesus Christ who surrenders his or her life to Christ's mission.

The relationship that Christ had with these twelve men was different than His relationship with anyone else on the earth. He called them into a deeper, more intimate relationship so He could invest His life in them. The result of following Him would be that Jesus would make them fishers of men. They would not only be His disciples, but they would become disciple-makers as well.

We also defined disciple-making in this first lesson. The definition is: The simple and lifelong process of following Christ, becoming more like Him, and leading others to do the same. Christ spent three years with His disciples preparing them to fulfill this mission. We saw in John 15:16 that His disciples will bear lasting fruit with their lives if they abide in Him. Apart from Him they can do nothing, but through His power they will change the world.

Lesson Two: Share the Word

In this lesson we studied the first component of disciple-making, which is to share the Word. We saw how faith in Christ should compel us to share with others what we know about Him. We saw this illustrated in John 1:29-51. In this passage, John the Baptist shared the Word with two of his disciples, one of which was Andrew. Then Andrew shared the Word with his brother Simon Peter. Phillip also shared the Word with Nathanael.

These men did not wait until they had it all figured out to go and share the Word with others. Their belief compelled them to share the Word without hesitation. Matthew 9:37-38 says that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, so we should pray for the Lord of the harvest to send more workers. He will send them through our lives as we make disciples of Christ. Multiplication was illustrated in this lesson as eventually 3,000 people came to faith in Christ through Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:42).

We also realized in this lesson that we are the "lasting fruit" of the disciples' lives of which Jesus spoke in John 15 because we have believed in Him through their message. Because of their faithfulness to share the Word, we believe today.

Lesson Three: Show the Word

In week three, we studied how Christ would physically leave the earth but would send His Spirit to live in the disciples so they could continue His ministry. The Holy Spirit would bring power so they could be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). We learned that the Greek definition of the word "witness" means to be a witness unto death or a martyr. How would the disciples do this? They would show the Word, which is another component of disciple-making. They would be Christ's ambassadors on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20). He would return to heaven, but they would remain on earth and would manifest (show) His presence with their lives. Christ had shown the disciples God's glory through His life. Now the disciples would take what they learned from Christ and show Him to others with their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ's very life had modeled this for them because He spoke only the words that the Father gave Him, and allowed God to work through His life. Christ showed the Word through extending mercy and grace to those in need. This included the sick, demon-possessed, hungry, and poor. As His disciples followed Him they saw how He showed the Word, and they learned to do the same.

Lesson Four: Teach the Word

In this lesson we saw several examples of how Jesus taught the Word to His disciples, which is another component of disciple-making. Christ gave God's Word His disciples and this sanctified them or set them apart. The mysteries of God's will were revealed to these men for the purpose of making disciples after Christ returned to heaven. Because they were set apart, the world would hate them, persecute them, and maybe even kill them.

We looked at examples of how Christ taught the Word through parables, miracles, and common conversation. Jesus' life was His classroom and He was always creating opportunities to teach them from everyday events. We saw how the disciples benefited from Christ's ministry to others because as He shared the Word and showed the Word, He taught the Word to His disciples in a deeper way.

Lesson Five: Serve the World

The final component of disciple-making that we have studied is serving the world. In this lesson we saw how Christ gave the disciples authority and sent them out to serve the world by preaching the Gospel and healing the sick (Mark 6:7-13). We learned that the disciples are able to participate in the ministry of Christ because of His power at work in them. They

cannot do anything apart from His power. We also saw that our purpose as disciples of Christ is identical to Christ's purpose when He was on earth. His purpose was to reveal the Father's glory, and so is ours.

Throughout the four Gospels we saw how Christ provided "on-the-job" training for His disciples while He was still with them on earth. He taught them how to live by both word and deed, and then He empowered them to go out into the world to serve others. It is here that we began to see the blessing of their salvation connected with the purpose for which they had been saved.

Christ sanctified Himself for their sakes so they may be truly sanctified. Now they are being sanctified (or set apart) for the sake of those in the world who don't believe in Christ. He called them as His disciples so He could multiply Himself in them and then send them out into the world when He physically returned to heaven. These men were His strategy for reaching the world with the Gospel.

Which Brings Us To...

...this lesson. We have seen how Christ reproduced His own life in the lives of His disciples. It began with a call and a promise: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." When they answered the call, He spent the next three years sharing, showing, and teaching the Word to them as they served the world together.

In this lesson, we will see the culmination of Christ's ministry to these men as He leaves them with one last command before He ascends into heaven. He says to them in Matthew 28:18-20, "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."

The Great Commission

This passage is what we know as "The Great Commission." Jesus prefaces His command to go and make disciples by telling His disciples that all authority has been given to Him. This word "authority" in verse 18 is the same Greek word "exousia" that we studied last week in Mark 6:7 when Jesus gave His disciples authority and sent them out to serve the world. It means, "Power of choice; liberty to do as one pleases; influence; power."

God has given Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth, and Christ has given to His disciples authority to fulfill the mission for which they've been sanctified. What is that mission? Most of us have heard it many times. Most of us would have even agreed before we studied disciple-making that The Great Commission was Christ's command to us as believers. But how many of us truly understood what it means? And how many of us were living it out personally and intentionally?

His Plan: Make Disciples

His plan revolves around two simple words in this passage—make disciples. The phrase "make disciples" does not appear in the King James translation of the Bible. It actually says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations..." The phrase "make disciples" (NIV translation) and the word "teach" in both translations is the same Greek word, *matheteuo*. It means, "To be a disciple of one; to follow his precepts and instructions; to make a disciple; to teach and instruct."

This word, *matheteuo*, is a command verb in the Greek and it is plural. That means that it is a mandate from Christ, a direct command that was issued not just to one person, but to all of the people to whom He was speaking. To whom was He speaking? Verse 16 says the eleven disciples (Judas was no longer with them) went to a mountain in Galilee and Jesus came to them there and issued this command to make disciples of all nations. This command was for all of them, and all who would believe through their message.

Continuing To Be More Like Christ

The Greek definition of "make disciples" helps us to understand what it is that Christ is commanding His disciples to do. He wants them to continue to follow His precepts and instructions and to teach others to do the same. Isn't this how we defined disciple-making in lesson one? We said that disciple-making is: The simple and lifelong process of following Christ, becoming more like Him, and leading others to do the same.

They have spent three years following Christ and learning from Him. They have also had opportunities to apply what they were learning as Jesus gave them authority to serve others alongside Him. Now the time has come for Him to depart and send them the Holy Spirit, their Helper, who will be with them and in them. It is through the power that the Spirit will bring that they will be able to obey the command that Christ issues to them in this passage (John 16:12-15; Acts 1:8).

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus lays out for His disciples how they are to make disciples of all nations. Every component of disciple-making that we have studied during this series is contained in these verses that most of us have heard many times.

- Go and make disciples (share the Word)
- Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (show the Word)
- Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (teach the Word)
- In all nations (serve the world)

It Is Finished

Jesus closes by telling them that He will be with them always. Mark 16:19-20 gives another account of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Verse 19 says that after Jesus spoke this command to His disciples, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The fact that He sat down is significant because it illustrates a completed work. We saw Jesus pray to the Father in John 17:4 that He has, "Brought You [God] glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do." Then again in John 19:30 Jesus says on the cross, "It is finished!" The first time He said His work was finished was in reference to revealing God to His twelve disciples.

The next time He said His work was finished was in reference to His redemptive work on the cross to make a way for the world to know God through His blood. His physical work on earth is finished. He has completed what God sent Him to do. His position is also significant because throughout Scripture, the right hand is a symbol of strength, power and authority. It is also a place of favor. Even Christ's position in heaven at the right hand of God is a sign of His authority to reign over all.

Famous Last Words

Before He ascends into heaven to re-claim the seat of honor that He gave up to come to earth, Jesus' last words to His disciples is a command to take what they have learned and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in His name, and teaching them to obey God. Even here we see Jesus giving His disciples authority and power to participate in His ministry to the world, just as we saw Him do throughout His ministry (serve the world). He is the one who makes it possible for mankind to be forgiven. It is His power that accomplishes salvation. Yet, this work will no longer be carried out through His physical presence on earth, but through His disciples as they imitate His life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How Can Christ Be Finished?

You may be thinking, how is Christ's work finished if He hasn't returned to earth yet? Isn't there still work to be done? Why is He sitting down? This is where it gets really good. We saw in John 17 how Christ poured His heart out in prayer on behalf of His disciples before He went to the cross. He knew what obedience to His mission would cost them, and He interceded to the Father on their behalf. He prayed for their protection as they surrendered their lives to glorify Him in all the earth. This prayer showed us Christ's deep love and concern for His disciples. He wanted them to endure through the hardships they would face.

On to Acts

In the book of Acts, we see the beginning of His disciples' ministry as God fulfills His promise and sends the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower them to be Christ's witnesses. So what is Christ doing now? Is He just sitting in heaven watching His plan play out? Romans 8:34-38 tells us that Christ is at the right hand of God also interceding for us. The passage goes on to say that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Not hardship, persecution, or even death. For Christ's sake we face death all day long. We are considered by the world as sheep to be slaughtered. But because of Christ, because of His power, His authority, His position, and His intercession on our behalf, we are more than conquerors in whatever we face. He sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us. So just as He told His disciples in Matthew 28:20, He is with us always, even until the end of the Age.

Hebrews 7:24-25 also teaches this truth. It says that Christ is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because He always intercedes for them. It is still Christ who is able to save forever. He is at the right hand of God interceding for us and for those who will believe through our message. Yes, we will face hardships and persecution if we choose to give ourselves to this command to go and make disciples. But, in all this we will be more than conquerors through Christ. All authority has been given to Him, therefore, He can accomplish this work through our lives if we choose to surrender ourselves to Him.

A New View

This truth should change the way we view our lives. Now, it's not about what we can "do for God" anymore, but about what we will allow Him to do through our lives. It's not about how much we know, but about how much we make Him known to others. It's not

about “not doing bad things”; it’s about surrendering our lives to make His glory known every minute of every day. Our focus will shift from our lives and our plans to the glory of Christ. The choice is ours to make. Will we continue to live for ourselves in a self-centered, non-Biblical Christianity, or will we go and make disciples by sharing the Word, showing the Word, teaching the Word and serving the world?

What Does This Mean In Our Lives Daily?

Here, finally, is where we must each evaluate the contribution that our life and witness is making to the supreme purpose of Christ. Is anyone following us to Christ? If so, are those who have followed us to Christ now leading others to Him and training them to make disciples? Consider what it would mean to the future of the Church if we each had only one true disciple now to show for our labors. Would this not immediately double our influence? And suppose that we shared, showed, taught and served alongside another, even as the first succeeded in the same way. Would this not multiply our lives four times over? Theoretically, in a manner of multiplication, our ministry alone would soon reach multitudes with the Gospel.

This is what the world needs: not to hear more of our political and religious opinions; not for us to boycott and picket and complain; not for us to point out what everyone else is doing wrong. What the world needs is men and women who know their Redeemer from personal experience, who see His vision and feel His passion for the world, and who are willing to be nothing so that He might be everything - men and women who want only for Christ to produce His life in and through them for the sake of those who do not know Him. The question is, will you be one of those men or women? The harvest is plentiful. Let’s get to work!

TEACHING (This part of the lesson is formatted for a small group, but you can also study it on your own.)

Review / 5 minutes

Spend a few minutes allowing your group to share what this study has meant to them personally. You might facilitate discussion by asking some of the following questions:

- Before we began this series, what were your thoughts about disciple-making?
- How has this study changed your ideas about what it means to be a Christian?
- How has this study changed the way you relate to those in your sphere of influence?

- Has this study changed the way you learn and/or teach?
- How has this study changed your understanding of Christ’s mission?
- How has it changed your understanding of your purpose in life?

Key Study / 35 minutes

As you begin your study time in God’s Word, pray that God would make the entire group receptive to what He wants to reveal to the group today as you discuss His word. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the group into all truth (John 16:13) so that He will be glorified through the discussion. Pray that each person’s life will be changed as a result of the truths you learn today (James 1:22).

Review

Using the lesson commentary, spend a few minutes reviewing what we have studied over the last five weeks. Use the following questions to help with the review.

From Lesson One

- How did Christ call His first four disciples? What phrase did He use?
- What does it mean to “follow” Christ?
- What did Christ mean when He said He would make them “fishers of men?”
- What is a disciple of Christ?
- What is disciple-making?
- What is the only way to bear lasting fruit with our lives?

From Lesson Two

- What is the first component of disciple-making that we studied?
- How did we see sharing the Word played out in the lives of John the Baptist, Andrew and Phillip?
- How did they go about sharing the Word? How quickly, how much did they know, who did they tell, etc?
- What “lasting fruit” was borne through their lives when Peter preached at Pentecost?
- How are we, in this room, their “lasting fruit?”

From Lesson Three

- What is the next component of disciple-making that we studied?
- How did Christ show the Word to His disciples?
- How would they be able to show the Word to others? Who would God send to them to empower them?
- How were they Christ’s ambassadors? How are we His ambassadors?

From Lesson Four

- What is the next component of disciple-making that we studied?
- What were some of the examples we saw of how Jesus taught the Word to His disciples?
- How did He create opportunities to teach them?
- How did the disciples benefit from Jesus' ministry to the world?

From Lesson Five

- What is the final component of disciple-making that we studied?
- How did Jesus empower His disciples to serve the world while He was still on earth?
- How did Jesus provide "on-the-job" training for His disciples?
- How does serving the world connect the blessing of our salvation with the purpose for which we've been saved?

The Great Commission

Explain to your students that today we are going to see how all of the components of disciple-making come together in Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. Have your group open their Bibles to Matthew 28:16-20 and read it aloud.

Using the commentary, explain the Greek meanings of the words "authority" and "make disciples." Make sure to tell them that this is a command to all believers in Christ, not just a select few with certain "gifts." If we have placed our faith in Christ, we each have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are equipped with all we need to make disciples.

Using the white board to illustrate, explain how each component of disciple-making is contained in these verses.

- "Go and make disciples" (share the Word)
- "Baptizing" (show the Word)
- "Teaching them to obey" (teach the Word)
- "Of all nations" (serve the world)

Have your group turn in their Bibles to Mark 16:19-20 and read it aloud. Using the lesson commentary and the following questions, lead a discussion about these verses.

- What does verse 19 say Christ did after He gave His disciples the command to go and make disciples?
- What is the significance of Christ sitting down at God's right hand? How does it illustrate His finished work on earth?
- Is the right hand position significant?

- If He is seated in heaven, how will His work continue on earth?
- Why do you think the Great Commission was His last words to His disciples?

Using the reading (first) section of this lesson, explain to your group that Christ is still at work on earth through our lives. Our power still comes from Him. He works through our lives. Explain that He does have a ministry even now in heaven.

Have your group turn to Romans 8:34-39 and read it aloud. Holding their place in Romans, have them turn to Hebrews 7:24-25 and read it aloud. Lead a discussion on these verses using the commentary and the following questions.

- What do these verses tell us that we will face as disciples of Christ?
- What is our promise in these verses? Can we be separated from Christ's love?
- What do these verses say Christ is doing in heaven for us?
- How should this truth affect the way we live our lives as disciples of Christ?
- How can this truth encourage us in the face of a mission that can seem too big for us to achieve?

Application / How will this Truth change me?

Lead a discussion using the following question:

- After all that we have studied in God's Word, do you think it is possible for your one life to impact the world for Christ? Why or why not?

Spend some time allowing your students to answer this question. Discuss how this series will be lived out in their lives. Discuss practical ways that you, as a small group, can begin to live it out together. Let this be a time for honest communication and questions, and a time for your group to make plans to take practical steps together to make disciples of all nations.

Close your time together in prayer.

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