

The Meaning of Disciple (Words for 10-7-2018)

The noun “disciple” is a translation of *mathētēs* (μαθητής), meaning “a learner,” “a student,” “a follower,” “an imitator,” “an adherent of a teacher and of his or her teachings.” *Mathēteuō* (μαθητεύω) is the verb form of *mathētēs* (μαθητής), and it is translated “make disciples” in Matthew 28:19, NKJV.

To make a disciple of a new convert to Jesus Christ means to make one a learner of the ways and words of Jesus Christ, to make one an imitator of Jesus Christ, to make one a follower of Jesus Christ, and to make one an adherent to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Anyone can have disciples (Acts 20:30). In the New Testament, in addition to the disciples of Jesus, we read about the disciples of John the Baptist (Matthew 9:14), the disciples of Moses (John 9:28), the disciples of the Pharisees (Matthew 22:15-16), and the disciples of false teachers (Acts 20:30).

God wants everyone who believes in Christ to be like Christ. God is at work in all of us to make us like Jesus Christ. Jeremiah pictures God as a Potter (Jeremiah 18:1-6). Malachi pictures God as a Refiner (Malachi 3:1-3). John pictures God as a Gardener (John 15:1-2). Peter pictures God as a Stonemason (1 Peter 2:5). God is working all things together for good to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-30; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).

All believers are commanded to share the gospel with others and to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15–16, NKJV). Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20, NKJV).

Let us obey the commands of Jesus regarding witnessing and making disciples, and let us stand on these words: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16, NKJV).

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The Motives for Making Disciples (10-14-2018)

First, we are commanded to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). The verb “Go” is a translation of the Greek participle *poreuomai* (πορεύομαι) which means “going.” The command of Jesus is to “make disciples of all nations” as we are “going.” We are not to wait for potential disciples to come to us we are to go to them. The pattern is to start at home or in one’s own neighborhood (Acts 1:8).

Second, making disciples is the plan of Jesus for reaching the nations for Jesus (Matt. 28:19).

Third, discipleship is one of the five ships of a healthy church. The early church was a healthy church (Acts 2:37-47).

Fourth, “Disciple” was the name most often used to refer to the early believers in Christ (Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 26; 11:26; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 19:1, 30; 20:7; 21:16). The early believers were disciples who made disciples (Acts 14:19-22). According to Acts 11:26, “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” The word Christian occurs only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

Fifth, the promise of the presence of Jesus (Matthew 28:20). “Always” is a translation of “pasas tas hemeras.” The literal translation is “all the days.” Jesus promised to be with us all the days – the delightful days, the dark days, the dangerous days. Jesus will be with us when we are in the lion’s den of difficult people, the fiery trials of afflictions, the floods of discouragement, the storms of disappointments. The Jesus Who will be with us Has “all authority.” He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Jesus is sovereign everywhere (Matthew 28:18). The Jesus Who will be with us is the One who created the world out of nothing and hung it out on nothing (Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; Job 26:7). Jesus is holding the world together at the present time (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3).

The Jesus Who is with us died, and He rose from the dead. He has conquered all of His enemies (John 16:33; Ephesians 1:19-23; 4:8-10; Colossians 2:11-15; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 1:17-18).

Let us obey the commands of Jesus regarding witnessing and making disciples, and let us stand on these words: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16, NKJV).

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The Methods of Making Disciples (10-21-2018)

Observe the pattern of Jesus in making His disciples: First, Jesus spent time in prayer before selecting His disciples. Jesus continued all night in prayer before selecting the twelve with whom He would spend a great deal of time (Luke 6:12-16; Mark 3:13-15). Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him (John 6:64, 70-71; 13:1-2, 11). Why did Jesus choose Judas? Jesus chose Judas to fulfill the Scriptures (Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14; cf. Matthew 5:17; 10:4; 26:47-56; John 13:18, 21; 17:12; Acts 1:16). Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him (Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; cf. Luke 22:31-32).

Second Jesus chose His disciples to be with Him; Jesus spent time with His disciples. Notice that the call of Christ is first to Himself (Mark 3:13-15). After spending time with Jesus, the disciples were sent out with power to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Mark 3:14-15). In the following passages, observe the power and peace of Peter because he had spent time with Jesus: Acts 3:6; 4:13; 5:12-15; 9:32-42; 12:6-7.

Third, Jesus taught His disciples by explanations and examples (Matthew 5:1-16; John 13:15).

Pray about the person God wants you to spend time discipling. Although we cannot always disciple everyone we lead to Christ, we should do all that we can to see that they are disciplined by someone. In most cases, women should disciple women and men should disciple men.

Jesus had four groups of followers: The great multitude (Luke 6:17), the seventy (Luke 10:1, 17), the twelve (Matthew 11:1; Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1; John 6:65-68), and three within the twelve: Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1; 26:36-37; Luke 8:51).

Let us obey the command of Jesus to make disciples. Let us pray and ask God to point out the person with whom He wants us to disciple.

Let us obey all of the commandments of Jesus and let us teach the person we are discipling to do the same. Let us stand on these words: “Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, New Living Translation).

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Obedience to the Commands of Jesus (10-28-2018)

We have seen that one of the ways we make disciples is by teaching others to obey the commands of Jesus: “Teach them to observe all thing that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). The purpose of Bible study and meditation is obedience (Joshua 1:8; Ezra 7:10; Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 7:21-27; Luke 6:46; 11:28; John 13:17; James 1:22).

Jesus taught by explanations with illustrations and by examples (Matthew 5:1-16; 13:1-52; John 13:15; cf. 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:2).

Jesus commanded us to make disciples by teaching them to obey all of His commandments (Matthew 28:20).

Disobedience to a command of Jesus is sin. In the New Living Translation, James 4:17 says, “Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.” We must take sin seriously, and we must deal drastically with sin (Matthew 5:29-30). Sin hinders prosperity (Proverbs 28:13; Jer. 5:25; cf. 1 John 1:9). Sin hinders prayer (Isaiah 59:1-3; Psalm 66:18). Sin hinders the manifest presence of God (Isaiah 59:1-2; cf. John 14:21). Sin hinders praise (Psalm 51:8, 12, 14, 15). Sin hinders healing, and sin can cause sickness (2 Samuel 12:13-15; Psalm 107:17-20; Mark 2:1-12; John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30; James 5:14-16).

Ten of the commandments of Jesus: (1) Make disciples (Matthew 28:19). (2) Witness (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). (3) Love God and others including enemies (Matthew 5:44; 22:35-40; cf. John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:12-13; 21:15; cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 3:14-18; 4:7-21). (4) Seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). (5) Forgive one another (Mark 11:25-26; cf. Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13). (6) Seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20). (7) Rejoice in trials (Matthew 5:11-12; John 16:33). (8) Watch and pray (Matthew. 26:41; cf. Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). (9) Come to the Lord’s Table in remembrance of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). (10) Seek God’s glory (Matthew 5:16).

Let us obey the command of Jesus to make disciples. Let us pray and ask God to point out the person with whom He wants us to disciple. Let us obey all of the commandments of Jesus and let us teach the person we are discipling to do the same. Let us stand on these words: “Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, New Living Translation).

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