

DISCIPLESHIP. LESSON 11

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	WORSHIP (20 minutes)	<i>[CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD]</i> GOD IS MY HELPER
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Definition.

What is "worship"? Worship is:

- *an attitude* of awe, adoration, submission and dedication to God,
- *expressed* in various kinds of prayer and the way we live every day (lifestyle).

In order to worship God, we need to get to know "the God of the Bible".

During every worship time we will learn one characteristic (attribute) of God for which we worship him.

Meditation.

Theme: God is my Helper.

Read the Bible passages and the explanation or explain it in your own words.

1. God helps us against our enemies.

(1) Every believer has enemies.

These enemies may be certain people who hate our faith in Jesus Christ. They may be evil spirits whose goal it is to destroy our faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes they may be members of our own family or not born-again members of the Church. Sometimes the enemy is the sinful world around us. And sometimes the greatest enemy is the sinful nature within us.

But God is our Helper. He says, "I am going with you and I will fight for you." How does God fight for us?

(2) Sometimes God removes our enemies.

Read 2 Chronicles 20:12-17,22-23. He fights for us and allows us to look on and see his power and victory.

(3) Sometimes we must face our enemies.

Read Luke 6:27-28; 1 Peter 2:21-23. At times God does not remove our enemies from us, because he wants to use our enemies to train our character and teach us to do good towards bad people, to love them and pray for them! Or he wants to teach us to become a follower of Christ's example in difficult circumstances. When our reaction to our enemies is pleasing to the Lord, he makes even our enemies live at peace with us (Proverbs 16:7). At other times, God wants to equip us to do spiritual battle against our enemies with a spiritual armour (Ephesians 6:10-18).

2. God helps us in our circumstances.

Read Deuteronomy 1:29-33; Hebrews 13:5-6. One of the most difficult things imaginable is to walk and live in a desert, which is very hot by day and very cold by night. There are no natural resources of water, food or shelter. It is unprotected at all sides from the attacks of enemies. God's people had to endure such difficult circumstances 40 years long! Yet God says that his people saw how he carried them as a father carries his son all the way they went until they reached their destination. Often God does not remove such difficulties, but he also does not abandon us! We need not overcome our difficulties alone. God promised to carry us through them. In this way he teaches us to depend on his nearness, wisdom, power, help and eventual salvation.

3. God helps us on our journey.

It is not easy to travel without knowing the way we should go. Although we know our final destination, the road to it is unknown. We have never before travelled this way! But God himself is our Guide, map and compass! God himself goes ahead of us, shows us the way we should go and also searches out the places for us to rest. By putting our hand in his, he will show us the way one step at a time (Psalm 119:105).

Worship.

Take turns to worship God (in one or two sentences) in his characteristic as being your Helper.

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	<i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> JOHN 7:53 – 11:37
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Take turns and **share** (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (John 7:53 – 11:37).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	<i>[FELLOWSHIP]</i> OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO ONE ANOTHER
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How do Christians relate to one another? What is the characteristic of Christian fellowship? In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The characteristic of Christian fellowship is to love one another just as Christ loves us. Love is the most visible and distinguishing mark of Christians that differentiates them and their faith from that of others! Love draws people to Jesus Christ and also to the Christian fellowship (the Church)! How exactly do Christians love one another? This purpose of this study is to look at practical ways to love one another.

A. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

1. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships with God and with people in the Body of Christ.

With whom do Christians have a confidential fellowship?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:9 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 12:25; Ephesians 3:12; 1 John 1:3.

Christians have the privilege to have a personal and confidential relationship with the Triune God: with God the Father, on the basis of what Jesus Christ has accomplished and through the work of the Holy Spirit. Christians also have the privilege to have close relationships with other Christians in the Body of Christ.

As a Christian you cannot think yourself apart from Jesus Christ or the Christian Church (i.e. the Body of Christ)! Christians are members of the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the Body. The Body functions only when the members carry out the will of the Head! Jesus Christ as Head does not allow members to break away or separate themselves from the Body! He does not allow the Body to function apart from himself (cf. Revelation 3:14-22)!

2. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships in groups.

What could Christians do whenever they meet together?

Read Acts 2:42; 5:42; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Timothy 4:13.

Most Christians in the world meet together regularly in small or large groups. During their meetings, they share the Good News and study the Bible. They worship God, sing, make music, talk and eat together. The groups are essential for Christian fellowship.

3. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships with responsibilities towards one another.

The best way to understand Christian fellowship is to study the responsibilities Christians have towards one another. The Bible teaches: “Love one another”, “Teach one another”, “Serve one another”, etc. These commandments are addressed to all Christians in the world. All Christians have exactly the same responsibilities towards one another. When Christians put these responsibilities into practise, they really love one another as Christ loves them!

But, what are these responsibilities that Christians have towards one another? They are responsibilities in the area of Christian attitudes, Christian speaking and Christian acting (behaviour). We will study these responsibilities and give suggestions for possible applications of these responsibilities.

B. THE KEY RESPONSIBILITY: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

The most essential and highest norm of Christian fellowship is to love one another, just as Jesus Christ loves them.

1. Love is a command.

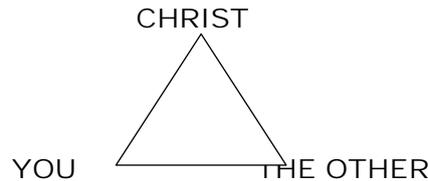
John 13:34-35 says, “A new command I give you. Love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” This command of Jesus is no option! Christians do not have a choice ; they must love!

1 Thessalonians 3:12 says, “ May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other ...”

2. The love of Christ is the norm and standard.

Christians must love, but not as the world loves, not as non-Christians love, but as Jesus Christ loves them. The love of Christ is the norm and standard of love.

3. Christian love is a triangle.



Without Christ you are left with only a horizontal relationship with another imperfect human being just as all relationships in the world. Then you cannot love the other person just as Jesus Christ loves you! Then you can for example not forgive the other person as Jesus Christ forgave you. “Without me, you can do nothing!” (John 15:5).

Vertically you relate to Jesus Christ and find power and wisdom and his never-ending love for you. And horizontally you relate to other Christians with the love he love you. With Christ you can advance against an army and with God you can scale a wall (Psalm 18:29).

4. God is the first to love.

God loves us first (1 John 4:19). He loved us before the creation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4). He loved us before we are born, before we heard the Good News (Romans 10:14-17) and even before we understood what sin, righteousness and judgment meant (John 16:8-10).

5. The love of Jesus Christ is unconditional and self-sacrificial.

Jesus Christ loves us as a shepherd loves his sheep, seeking the lost until he finds them, carrying the young and weak against his heart and carrying them back to the fold. He leads us to green pastures and quiet waters. And protects us against lions and bears (John 10:9-10).

Jesus Christ loves us as a parent loves his children with compassion (Psalm 103:13). he loves as a friend loves, always moving about with us (John 15:14). He loves us self-sacrificially (John 10:11). Yes, he loves us with an eternal, unchangeable love (Jeremiah 31:3). The love of Jesus Christ is the norm and standard for Christian love.

6. Love is a gift.

To love is a command (and must be carried out), but love is at the same time a gift from the Spirit of Christ (and can be exercised) (Romans 5:5). Jesus Christ never commands a Christian to do something without enabling him to do it!

7. Love is attractive.

Christian love has the greatest attraction for people in the world. When Christians love one another, the people in the world know that they are followers of Jesus Christ.

Possible application. Love is patient, friendly and does not allow an unforgiving spirit to take control against someone who wrongs you (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Christians ought to show love towards people who are socially outcast, helpless or behave as enemies. Christians ought to take the initiative to love unlovely and loveless people and do things that build other people up or serve other people in an unselfish and self-sacrificial way.

C. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER

1. Romans 12:10.

(1) The responsibilities. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love and honour one another.

(2) Possible applications. To love as a brother is to reserve your close and intimate relationships, your tender affections and your deep spiritual unity for Christians only. To honour is to regard the good words and deeds of other Christians as done from good motives and never from evil motives, unless a consistent evil pattern is evident. To honour is to speak well and not evil of the other.

2. Romans 13:8-10.

(1) The responsibility is not to harm one another.

(2) Possible applications. Not to harm another woman by committing adultery, but by preserving the sacredness of the marriage relationship. Not to murder, but to help your neighbour keep alive and well. Not to steal, but to protect your neighbour's possessions. Not to covet, but to rejoice in the fact that your neighbour possesses desirable things.

3. Ephesians 4:32.

(1) The responsibilities are to be kind to one another, to be compassionate to one another and to be forgiving to one another.

(2) Possible applications. To be kind is to be friendly and gentle instead of being critical and repulsive. It is to look for ways to be helpful and meet the other person's needs. To be compassionate is to have good feelings from the heart to one another. To be forgiving is to say you no longer hold an offence against your neighbour and to pray for him.

4. Colossians 3:13.

(1) The responsibility is to forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

(2) Possible applications. To forgive as the Lord forgave you. To forgive seventy times seven times (without stopping). To forgive your neighbour from your heart. Whoever does not forgive others, will also not be forgiven by God.

5. Other one another responsibilities with regard to attitudes.

- Accept one another (Romans 15:1-7).
- Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16).
- Do not provoke each other by boasting and do not envy each other (Galatians 5:26).
- Bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- Live in peace with one another (1 Thessalonians 5:13).
- Always try to be kind to each other (1 Thessalonians 5:15).
- Clothe yourself with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5-6).

D. CHRISTIAN SPEAKING TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER

1. Romans 14:13.

(1) The responsibility is to stop passing judgement on one another.

(2) Possible applications. The weak must stop criticising the strong and the strong must stop finding fault with the weak. Christians must not force other Christians to practice their faith in exactly the same way as they themselves do. For example, they must respect a diversity of opinions with regard to what kinds of food are appropriate to eat, what kind of days should be special days, etc. Each group should rather help the other group to become more effective witnesses for Christ.

2. Colossians 3:9.

(1) The responsibility is not to lie to each other.

(2) Possible applications. To speak the truth in a way that will build the other up and assure him of your love. Do not promise to pray for someone if you do not intend to do it.

3. Colossians 3:16.

(1) The responsibilities are to teach one another and to admonish one another.

(2) Possible applications. The calling and duty does not only belong to the pastors and leaders of the congregation, but to every Christian! Christians should teach one another. For example, they teach one another by sharing their quiet times with one another, by doing Bible study together, by giving testimonies, by teaching and preaching. To admonish is to counsel one another in the areas of weakness and failure. It is to warn one another. It is to engrave God's teachings and commands in the Bible on one another's minds (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

4. Hebrews 10:24-25.

(1) The responsibilities are to spur one another on to love, to spur one another on to good works and to encourage one another to meet together.

(2) Possible applications. To spur on is to arouse and provoke one another to loving relationships and to do tasks that benefit others. To encourage is to stimulate one another to participate in at least one regular Christian group meeting where Christians are spurred on to love and good works.

5. Other one another responsibilities with regard to speaking.

- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14).
- Speak to one another in singing (Ephesians 5:19).
- Comfort and encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11).
- Encourage one another (Hebrews 3:12-13).
- Do not grumble against each other (James 5:9).
- Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another (James 5:16).

E. CHRISTIAN ACTIONS TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER

1. 1 Corinthians 12:25.

(1) The responsibility is to have equal concern for each other.

(2) Possible applications. To use your God-given abilities and opportunities to serve other Christians who especially need your service. On the one hand to help the weak and on the other hand to train the strong. Do not show favouritism to any particular group of people (Deuteronomy 10:17; 16:19).

2. Galatians 6:2 and 5.

(1) The responsibilities are to carry one another's burdens¹ in the sense of problems or difficulties that come from the outside, but bear your own load² in the sense of personal responsibilities.

(2) Possible applications. Christians are responsible to help carry as best as they can the "burdens" of other Christians, which are for example their tragedies, crises or losses.

However, they are not responsible to carry their "loads", which are their responsibilities for their own thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, needs, choices, values, and what they do with their time, possessions, talents, bodies and behaviour. A Christian is also responsible for how he uses his time, possessions, talents and body. No one else is responsible for these things. A Christian remains responsible for his own behaviour and reactions.

3. 1 Peter 4:9.

(1) The responsibility is to offer hospitality to each other without grumbling.

(2) Possible applications. To give lodging and food to Christian workers from other places or to needy brothers and sisters in your area.

4. Other one another responsibilities with regard to actions.

- Wash one another's feet (John 13:14).
- Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13).
- Use whatever gift you have received to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10-11).
- Have fellowship with one another by walking in the light (1 John 1:7).

F. PRACTICAL EXERCISE

1. Summary.

Christian fellowship consists of fulfilling "the responsibilities to one another" in the areas of the attitudes of your heart, the words of your mouth and the actions of your behaviour. Let love be the greatest distinguishing characteristic.

2. But: do not turn these responsibilities into new laws!

Christians must avoid the temptation to turn these responsibilities into a list of new laws which would be difficult to keep at once. No Christian can put all these responsibilities into practice at one time! God only wants us to grow in these responsibilities. Take into account your personal calling and spiritual gifts which God has given to you.

3. An exercise.

Suggestion: As a Christian group or congregation, choose one responsibility to one another and practise it as a group and as individuals for say one month.

4. Act in a play.

Second suggestion: Divide into groups of three or four people and each group prepares an act for about two minutes about one of the Christian responsibilities to one another. Act it out in the presence of the other group members.

5	PRAYER (8 minutes) <i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group **to pray short** to God in response to what you have learned today.

Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes) <i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Make a commitment to practise the responsibilities we have to one another.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter from John 11:38 – 14:31 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. (6) John 15:1-17. Theme: How do I bear fruit? Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the worship notes, the notes on your personal time with God, the teaching notes and this preparation.

¹ Greek: to baros, burden, pressure (e.g. of temptations), weight (e.g. of problems and difficulties coming from the outside)

² Greek: to fortion, load (of a ship), heavy pack (in your rucksack), minding your own business and taking care of your own responsibilities