

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 27

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) [CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD] GOD IS KNOWABLE
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Meditation.

Worship is adoring or praising God.

Theme: The God of the Bible can be known.

Read the Bible passages. Read or explain the following in your own words.

1. Only the God of the Bible revealed himself in human history.

The God of the Bible says, "Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. Apart from me there is no saviour" (Isaiah 43:10-11). "There is no other god" (Isaiah 45:14)! The "gods" of the other religions have been made by the hands of men or have been devised by the imaginations of people! They never reveal themselves, because they do not exist!

The God of the Bible is the Living God, who exists and reveals himself by speaking and acting in human history. He revealed himself during the Old Testament by appearing (Genesis 18:1; Exodus 3:2) and during the New Testament by living as the Man, Jesus Christ, among people (John 1:1,14). Thus, people can know the God of the Bible and fellowship with him!

2. Only a Living God reveals himself more than once to more than just one prophet.

Read Isaiah 46:1-13. In Isaiah God challenges the gods of Babylon to come with concrete proof that they (the gods) exist and live. But they could not and did not!

(1) Only the God of the Bible has not been created or made.

The "gods" of the other religions in the world have been made by human hands or devised by human minds. Woodcutters and smiths make idols from wood, silver and gold (Isaiah 46:6). The prophet Jeremiah says, "Hear what the LORD says to you, O house of Israel' This is what the LORD says, 'Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by the signs in the sky, though the nations are terrified by them. For the customs of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with a chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good (Jeremiah 10:1-5).

Philosophers and prophets of religions devise gods with their own fantasies. But all these "gods" cannot prove that they exist! They are dead! They do not speak and they do not reveal themselves at all! No one can relate to a dead "god"!

But the God of the Bible speaks and acts! The God of the Bible revealed himself and clearly proved that he exists and lives!

(2) Only the God of the Bible is incomparable.

The "gods" of the other religions in the world can be compared, because they have similar characteristics. All "gods" of other religions can be counted. They cannot see, cannot hear, cannot speak, cannot act. They have not entered human history, they do not save people from their sins, they do not punish unrighteousness.

The God of the Bible challenges all these religions of the world, "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?" (Isaiah 46:5). "I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9)! The God of the Bible says that the "gods" of the other religions do not even exist!

The apostle Paul says, "Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol (or any other religious duty) has any significance? Or that an idol (or the "god" of another religion) really exists? No, but pagans (non-Christians) sacrifice to demons, not to the God of the Bible. And I do not want you (Christians) to be participants with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:19-20). Thus, what the other religions regard as "gods", the God of the Bible regards as "demons"!

(3) Only the God of the Bible has revealed himself in human history.

The "gods" of the other religions in the world have not revealed anything that has happened in the past (cannot tell the history of the past)! Because they consist only of dead materials or only as a religious idea, they do not speak and do not

act in human history. Because these “gods” do not reveal themselves and never come down to people, their religious teachers demand that people must climb up to their “god” by means of many religious laws and duties! Hindus must practice yoga (of knowledge, works, devotion or occultism) in order to become one with their “god”. Buddhists must climb up the eightfold path in order to experience the enlightenment. Jews must keep 613 laws in order to be justified. For example, they must pray three times every day, fast twice every week, give a tenth of their money and conduct three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year.

But the God of the Bible revealed himself and has come down to people. He speaks and acts within human history. Since creation he revealed what happened in the past! “Remember the former things those of long ago” (Isaiah 46:9). The Bible is filled with God’s words and acts within human history! In the middle of human history, the God of the Bible even took besides his divine nature, the human nature and entered his creation and human history in Jesus Christ. He lived within human history among people (John 1:1,14). He died in human history for the sins of people. He was resurrected in human history to give people new (eternal) life. Through the Spirit and Word of God, the God of the Bible continues to speak and act in and through Christians in human history.

(4) Only the God of the Bible has predicted the future.

The “gods” of the other religions in the world have not revealed anything that would happen in the future (they made no predictions)! That is why they are silent as the grave! They have nothing to say!

But the God of the Bible says, “I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me! I made known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

- To the very first man, Adam, he already at the creation announced that Jesus Christ would come and crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15)! This was fulfilled at the first coming of Christ (Matthew 12:28-30; Luke 10:17-20; John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Johannes 3:8; Revelation 12:1-12; Revelation 20:1-3)!
- To Abraham (2167-1992 B.C.) he announced more than 200 years earlier that his people would live 400 years in Egypt and be oppressed as slaves (Genesis 15:13-14). This was literally fulfilled!
- To Moses (1527-1407 B.C.) he announced 940 years earlier that his people would be exiled to Babylon and thereafter be dispersed among the nations (Deuteronomy 28:45,49-52,62-64). This was literally fulfilled!
- In more than 60 prophesies in the Old Testament he announced between 2000 and 500 years earlier that Jesus Christ would come and what he would do! All these prophecies of the God of the Bible were literally fulfilled!

(5) Only the God of the Bible carries his people.

The “gods” of the other religions in the world cannot move by themselves! They have to be carried around on the shoulders of their worshippers. Later these “gods” were carried on the backs of donkeys into exile (Isaiah 46:1). They are put into temples, fixed with nails and ropes to keep them upright and then never move from that place. “From that spot it cannot move” (Isaiah 46:7a).

But the God of the Bible carries his people since their birth to their old age! He promises that what he has done, he will continue to do, sustain them and rescue them” (Isaiah 46:3-4). Just as a father carries his child (on his shoulders), so God carries his people through the desert of life along the whole way until they reach their destination (Deuteronomy 1:31)!

(6) Only the God of the Bible hears prayers.

The “gods” of the other religions in the world never answer the prayers and cries for help of their worshippers. “Though one cries out to it, it does not answer” (Isaiah 46:7b). People sometimes regard their “god” to be so highly exalted above people that no-one can talk to him or fellowship with him. The adherents of the other religions pray, but receive no definite answers.

But the God of the Bible always listens to the prayers of his people. He promises “Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24)!

(7) Only the God of the Bible rescues people.

The “gods” of the other religions in the world cannot rescue anyone. They rescue no-one from their sins, rescue no-one from their troubles (Isaiah 46:7c) and resurrect no one from the dead. They cannot even rescue themselves from being exiled and from being carried away on the backs of donkeys (Isaiah 46:1-2).

But the God of the Bible saves, sustains and rescues (Isaiah 46:4c). He saves believers from their sins and says, “I am he who blots out your transgressions and remembers your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25)! “Apart from me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:11).

3. Only Jesus Christ brings the true knowledge of God.

Read Matthew 11:25-27. The true knowledge of the God of the Bible comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ! He only knows God. And only the people, to whom he reveals this knowledge, know God.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1) that revealed God and God’s will. Jesus Christ is the Spirit of God who spoke through the prophets in the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:9-12) and through the apostles in the New Testament (John 16:13-15). Jesus Christ is the Mediator who reveals the One and Only God to people.

People who know Jesus Christ, also know God (John 8:19). People who receive Jesus Christ, also receive God (Matthew 10:40) and people who reject Jesus Christ, also reject God (Luke 10:16)!

Worship.

Take turns to worship God as the One you can really know.

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	<i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> GENESIS 12:1 – 15:21
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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 (Genesis 12:1 – 15:21).

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

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	<i>[GOSPEL]</i> CONCEPTS OF THE GOSPEL - PART 2
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Introduction. When we share the message of the gospel with people, we must be able to explain the words we use. In manual 1, lesson 2, we explained the concepts of “sin”, “death” and “judgement”.

In this lesson we will explain two more concepts:

- “Why Jesus Christ is the only way to God the Father.”
- The meaning of “faith” in Jesus Christ.

A. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

The message of the gospel says, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Teach. Why is Jesus Christ the only Saviour of the World? Why can other so-called *saviours* not really save people? Consider why only Jesus Christ qualifies to be the Saviour.

1. Jesus Christ made unique claims about himself.

Read John 5:16-30.

Jesus Christ is equal with God the Father (John 5:18). He possesses the divine life of God the Father (John 5:26). He does the same work as God the Father (John 5:19). He raises the spiritual dead and gives them eternal life (John 5:21, 24-25). He will raise the physical dead and be the Judge in the final judgment (John 5:21-22, 28-29). No one else in history did this or can do this!

Read John 10:36-38.

Jesus Christ is not a mere man that claims to be God (John 10:33), but he is “the Son of God”, that is, God who took on the human nature and entered creation and human history to reveal himself to people and save people (John 10:36). God the Father is in God the Son and God the Son is in God the Father (John 10:38). And God the Son does what God the Father does (John 10:37).

Read John 14:6-10.

God the Son is the only Way to God the Father (John 14:6). God the Son reveals God the Father (John 14:7,9). When Jesus says, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:10), he is not speaking of *spiritual* unity, but of *ontological* unity – He is speaking about the way of being or existence of the Divine Being. Jesus Christ is one way in which the Divine Being exists and reveals himself. Jesus Christ and God have One and the Same Divine Nature (John 10:30)! That is why Jesus Christ also says, “He who has seen me, has seen the Father” and whoever knows me, knows God (John 14:9).

Read Matthew 10:40 and Luke 10:16.

Jesus Christ says, “He who receives me, receives the One who sent me” and “He who rejects me, rejects him who sent me”! Simeon said, “This child (Jesus Christ) is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against (by the religions of the world)” (Luke 2:34). Every human being stands or falls with regard to his relationship to Jesus Christ!

These claims of Jesus Christ are valid because they are prophecies that have been fulfilled in history.

Read Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:5.

About 700 years before Jesus Christ actually came to earth, God prophesied that this Saviour would be called “God with us” and that he would be “pierced for our transgressions” in order to save us. More than 60 prophecies about this coming Saviour in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ¹, of which 30 prophecies were all fulfilled in one

¹ Study manual 3, supplement 15: “The prophecies about Jesus Christ”.

day of his life! Coincidence is absolutely impossible! There is but one chance out of 100 000 000 000 000 000 (17 zero's) that 8 of these predictions would be fulfilled in just one person in history. God predicted the coming of the Saviour. Jesus Christ fulfilled all these predictions. That is why the claims of Jesus Christ are the truth.

2. The apostles made unique claims concerning Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 4:12.

The apostles claimed that God had only given one name to people on earth by which they *must* be saved. And that name is Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is not just a prophet pointing the way to salvation. He himself is the only Way to God and the only way to salvation! Whoever denies this, is not a true apostle (Revelation 2:2)!

Read John 1:1-4,11-12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

Already before the creation of the universe, God had decided that he himself would enter the created time and space and become a man in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:20). And already before the creation of the universe, God had chosen Christians to be his holy and blameless people (Ephesians 1:4). God himself entered human history and shared the lot of mankind on earth in order to save people from their sins. That is why Jesus said, "The Father does his work, living in me" (John 14:10).

Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. The word "Mediator" means someone who stands between God and man; the One through whom the invisible God acts visibly in the world. Jesus Christ is:

- the Mediator of the creation, because God created everything only through Jesus Christ (John 1:3).
- the Mediator of the revelation, because God revealed himself completely only in Jesus Christ (John 1:4). "Life" summarises the God's being and "light" is the visible revelation thereof.
- the Mediator of salvation, because God adopts spiritual children (sons and daughters) only through Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:5).
- the Mediator of judgement. God has entrusted all judgement to God the Son (John 5:22) Every human being stands or falls with respect to Jesus Christ (Luke 2:34)

As the Only Mediator between God and people (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ represents God with people (Matthew 1:23; Colossians 1:15) and represents people with God (1 John 2:1-2).

3. Why the claims of Jesus Christ and the apostles are completely valid.

The claims of Jesus Christ and the apostles that Jesus Christ can be and is the Only Saviour of the world, is absolutely true and valid because of three things:

(1) Only Jesus Christ reveals God completely.

Jesus Christ is the Perfect Revelation of God to man.

Read Hebrews 1:3 (John 1:1,14,18; Philippians 2:6-8; Colossians 1:15; Colossians 2:9)

No other person or religious leader in the whole history of this world has made the claim that he was the visible human revelation of the invisible God of the Bible! No other person in history was God in human form, that is, was God who also took on the human nature and lived among people in history. Jesus Christ is "the radiance of God's glory", that is, the visible expression of all God's divine characteristics (like God's holiness, righteousness and love). Jesus Christ is "the exact representation of God's being", that is, he is the exact visible image of God's reality, real being or substantial nature. The Deity (Divine Being) in all its fullness is present in Jesus Christ.

(2) Only Jesus Christ is sinless and perfect forever.

He is the Perfect Sacrifice for the atonement of man's sins.

Read Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26-28.

In order to be the Perfect Sacrifice for the atonement of man's sins, a person must qualify in four areas.

The sacrifice of atonement must be:

- a human being (John 1:1,14). An animal does not qualify, but served during the Old Testament period as "an illustration for the present time (the New Testament period)" (Hebrews 9:7-10,13-14; Hebrews 10:1-4).
- sinless (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26-28). A sinner, even if he is a prophet or a priest (high priest) does not qualify, because he must bring an atonement sacrifice for his own sins.
- willing to die (John 10:17-18). An unwilling victim does not qualify.
- God's choice (1 Peter 1:19-20). A self-appointed prophet or priest never qualifies as a saviour!

No other person or religious leader in the whole history of this world has made the claim that he is (forever) sinless, willing to die as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29) and to be the choice of the God of the Bible! Therefore no-one else in the history of the world qualifies to be the sacrifice of atonement. That is why no other person has given "his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

- (3) Only Jesus Christ was resurrected from death and lives forever.
He is the Perfect High Priest who prays and cares for believers.

Read Hebrews 7:23-25.

No other person or religious leader in the whole history of this world has made the claim that he has been resurrected from the dead! All famous religious leaders and prophets still lie in their graves.

However, Jesus Christ prophesied at least three times that he would die and be resurrected (Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33-34)! Very many people have over a period of 40 days been eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)! Through his resurrection from the dead “he was declared to be the Son of God with power” (Romans 1:3-4; Matthew 28:18). He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. From there he establishes his kingdom in the hearts and lives of millions of his people on earth through the preaching of the gospel of grace.

Nevertheless, this grace is available only until the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. That is why people are called to repent today (Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:2). At his first coming Jesus Christ came as Saviour, to seek and to save lost people (Luke 19:10). But at his second coming he will come as Judge to judge people (Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Then there will be no more opportunity to repent or to believe. Therefore, when you hear this gospel message, you should repent and believe it (Mark 1:15)!

B. THE MEANING OF FAITH IN THE BIBLE

The message of the gospel says, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever *believes* in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

1. What is faith?

- (1) The Christian faith is based on facts!

The Christian faith is not a leap in darkness. Faith does not begin where reason stops. Faith is not based on one prophet’s revelation at one point in history within one culture, but on the revelation of the same truth by more than 40 prophets and apostles over a period of more than two thousand years and in three different cultures of the world (Aramaic in the East, Hebrew in the Middle East and Greek in the West)! The Christian Faith is based on facts! Faith is the absolute assurance or certainty that these facts are true. Faith is to have a personal conviction about these truths and a personal relationship with the God who revealed these truths.

- (2) The Christian faith has more historical witnesses than any other historical or religious event!

The Bible is full of facts that God has spoken and acted in human history and has related intimately to man. There are more eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses, written manuscripts of the Bible itself, translations of the Bible in many languages and archaeological proof that the Bible and the truth of its contents are genuine historical facts than for any other ancient historical event that is unequivocally accepted as history today! For example:

- The oldest complete Hebrew manuscript of Isaiah found at Qumran at the Dead Sea is dated 125 B.C. (560 years after it was written).
- A Greek fragment of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 6:52-53) is dated 50 A.D. (4 years after it was written).
- A Greek fragment of Gospel of John (John 18:31-34,37-38) is dated 130 A.D. (33 years after it was written)
- The Chester Beatty Papyri contain most of the Greek New Testament and is dated 200-250 A.D. (150 years after the completion of the whole New Testament).
- Thousand manuscripts of New Testament translations in Latin, Syrian, three Egyptian languages, Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Georgian and Arabic are dated between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. (that is, within 300 years after the completion of the New Testament in Greek).
- The Codex Vaticanus contains almost the whole Greek New Testament and is dated 325-350 A.D. (250 years after the completion of the New Testament).
- The Codex Sinaiticus contains almost the whole Greek New Testament and half of Greek Old Testament and is dated 350 A.D. (250 years after the completion of the New Testament).
- The Codex Alexandrinus contains almost the whole Greek Bible and is dated 400 A.D. (300 years after the completion of the New Testament).²
- Five thousand other Greek New Testament manuscripts are dated between the 10th and 15th century AD.

All these above mentioned documents proof that the original Greek text has remained unchanged!

This is historic proof that no manuscript of the Bible has ever been changed! The accusation of other religions that the Bible has been falsified by Jews and Christians is a totally unfounded fabrication and completely false!

² All these FACTS proof that it is a lie when Muslims say that Christians have changed the Bible! The Qur’an (including Surah 5:14-19 which makes this accusation) was only recorded MUCH LATER (after 722 A.D.)!

Anybody who neglects to study this evidence is not wise. The Christian message is the most important message in the whole history of mankind! That is why people should consider the Christian message.

2. Who makes faith in Jesus Christ possible?

What is God's part with respect to man's faith? Faith in the Bible is inseparably linked to God's initiative consisting of his revelation and his grace and to man's response consisting of his trust/faith and his obedience.

- Without God's initiative in revelation and grace, faith is impossible.
- Without man's response in obedience, faith is incomplete.

God is always first through his revelation and grace. Man is always second through his response consisting of faith (trust) and obedience (including good works).

(1) The revelation of God is necessary in order to know what one must believe.

Read Romans 10:14-17; Hebrews 11:6-8.

God always takes the initiative by sending someone to preach the gospel to you. Without this preaching one cannot believe (Romans 10:14-17). God revealed himself and his will to Noah and Abraham before they could respond to God by faith and obedience (action) (Hebrews 11:6-8).

(2) The grace of God is necessary in order that one is able to believe.

Read John 6:44,37; Philippians 1:29 (John 16:8; Acts 13:48).

God always takes the initiative by drawing people to Christ (John 6:44) and by convincing them in their minds and hearts of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-10). That is why all Christians acknowledge that their faith is "a gracious gift" from God (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27).

(3) The response of faith of man is necessary in order to be justified (saved).

Read Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:22.

Man responds to God's initiative by believing God's revelation and by receiving God's gracious gift. Faith is man's empty hand, which receives God's gift of salvation (John 1:12). Faith is represented by the trunk of a tree, which root represents God's grace and which fruit represents man's good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

With regard to man's response, Jesus Christ says, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to" (Luke 13:24; Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus also says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it" (Matthew 11:12). Man's response of faith requires courage, effort and laying hold of what Jesus Christ offers.

3. How do you practically believe in Jesus Christ?

Read John 1:12; Revelation 3:20 (Romans 10:9,10,13,17).

Faith as a human response to God's initiative has three elements:

(1) Knowledge.

With his ears a person should hear the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. Without hearing the truth contained in the gospel, faith is impossible. He would not know what to believe in.

(2) Trust (faith).

With his heart a person should believe that this message is true, not only for other people, but also for himself. Without agreeing in his own mind and heart that this is the truth for him personally, the gospel message remains knowledge, which does not affect or change him.

(3) Obedience.

With his mouth a person should pray and call on the Lord Jesus Christ to save him. In his prayer he should confess that Jesus Christ is his "Saviour" and "Lord", also the Lord of the whole universe. He should ask (the Spirit of) Jesus Christ to come into his heart and life. Without personally receiving Jesus Christ into his heart and life, he cannot be saved (John 1:12; Romans 5:17).

4. What should you do if you find it hard to believe in Jesus Christ?

Then begin by following Jesus Christ!

Read John 1:37-39,43-50; Matthew 9:9.

(1) Obedience (following) leads to faith.

When Jesus called people to discipleship, he said to them, "Come and see!" and "Follow me!" John and Andrew believed in Jesus and then began to follow him. Thereafter, they never stopped following him! Philip also believed, obeyed the call of Jesus and joined the small group of three disciples (John, Andrew and Peter).

Nathanael was a sceptic and could not immediately believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Philip then invited Nathanael to "Come and see!" Nathanael obeyed the invitation, came and met Jesus. Nathanael began to follow Jesus and in this way came into a situation where faith became possible. Finally Nathanael confessed: "Teacher, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!" Also Matthew obeyed the call of Jesus, left his regular job and followed Jesus.

At least in the case of Nathanael, the call to discipleship (to follow Jesus Christ) did not result in immediate faith, as we would expect from the order with the other disciples. The other disciples heard, believed and then began to obey (to follow). But Nathanael heard, obeyed (he began to follow) and then only began to believe! His obedience to the call of Jesus (the gospel) resulted in real faith and real discipleship! Nathanael was by nature critical and did not simply believe everything he heard. While others heard, believed and then obeyed (followed), Nathanael heard, obeyed (followed) and then believed.

That is why Philip did not try to convince him with the facts of the gospel or with arguments, but brought him into a situation where he could meet Jesus Christ and could believe in him. The meeting with Jesus was the event that made faith possible and real for Nathanael. For the one discipleship begins with faith, but for another discipleship begins with obedience: “Come (with us) and see (come and have a look)! In this way you can also meet Jesus Christ!”

(2) Obedience is absolutely indispensable.

The call of Jesus to become his disciple is not voluntary. A person must obey (The King is coming! You must choose to resist or to submit! Luke 14:31-32)! Otherwise it becomes “Christianity without discipleship” and “Christianity without discipleship” is always “Christianity without Christ”! In such Christianity, there is faith in God, but no following of Jesus Christ! Such faith remains an abstract idea, a myth that has no place for the fatherhood of God and therefore also excludes Jesus Christ as Son of God! To believe that there is only one God is not enough! Even the demons believe that there is one God – and they shudder (James 2:19)! Faith in God without following of Jesus Christ is “a dead faith” (James 2:17). The only true relationship people can have with Jesus Christ is to obey his call to discipleship and really follow him. Also Abraham’s faith was made complete by what he did (James 2:22).

Thus, when a person finds it hard to believe the facts of the gospel, he should obey the call of Jesus Christ to follow. When such a person gets up and starts to follow Jesus Christ, he comes into a situation where faith is possible and genuine.

5. Why is the call of Jesus to discipleship so important?

(1) The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is necessary.

Read Luke 9:57-58. The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is necessary, because no one can truly calculate the cost of discipleship. The first aspirant disciple did not wait for the call of Jesus to discipleship. He impulsively offered to follow Jesus Christ wherever he went. Jesus replied that the cost of discipleship consists of often not having a place to lie down his head. Discipleship is the way of the cross, because Jesus was on his way to the cross. No person can choose such a life of a disciple for himself. No person can call himself to such a destiny. This aspirant disciple could not respond to this, because the gulf between his voluntary offer to follow Jesus Christ and the call of Jesus Christ to follow him was too great.

(2) The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is absolute.

Read Luke 9:59-60. The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is absolute, because nothing must stand between Jesus and discipleship. No religious law and no social custom must be allowed to come between Jesus Christ and the person called. The second aspirant disciple received the call of Jesus to discipleship, but was still bound to the law as explained by the Jewish religious teachers: “First go and bury your father”. He knew what Jesus wanted him to do, but still he first wanted to fulfil “the law”. A religious law acted as a barrier between obeying the call of Jesus to discipleship and the aspirant disciple. The call of Jesus to discipleship must however be the strongest call. Nothing must be allowed to come between Jesus Christ and the one called. Anything that comes between Jesus Christ and the person called must be broken, must be put aside for the sake of Jesus Christ. Your former religion and former social customs (culture) forfeit their right of claim when they act as a barrier between Jesus Christ and following Jesus Christ as his disciple!

God speaks his last and final word through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2)! The call of Jesus to discipleship must be obeyed! The one called to follow, may not ignore or resist this sovereign call. “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (that is, to torment yourself by stubbornly holding on to your traditional religion) (Acts 26:14-18).

The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship directed to John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael was irresistible! Grace conquered in their lives and thereafter also in the life of Paul and the lives of millions of followers of Jesus everywhere in the world.

(3) The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is unconditional.

Read Luke 9:61-62. The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship is unconditional, because no one is allowed to dictate his own conditions or terms for discipleship. The third aspirant disciple also did not wait for the call of Jesus Christ to discipleship, but offered to follow Jesus as if discipleship were a career that he could map out for himself. However, while the first aspirant disciple did not calculate the cost of discipleship at all, the third aspirant disciple made his own calculation, and set his own conditions and terms for discipleship. He first wanted to go home and say good-bye to his family and friends. While the second aspirant disciple was bound to existing barriers in his religion and culture, the third aspirant disciple managed to set up his own barrier between Jesus Christ and himself. He wanted to follow Jesus Christ, but then it had to be on his own terms. Discipleship was to him a possibility that could only be realised when

certain conditions had been fulfilled. Thus, he lowered discipleship to the level of the human understanding of discipleship: “first you must do this and then you must do that”. His kind of discipleship is no longer true discipleship, but rather a kind of human religion. Genuine discipleship does not tolerate conditions that might come between Jesus and obeying his call to discipleship!

Thus, when a person finds it hard to believe the message of the gospel, he should simply obey the call of Jesus Christ to discipleship: “Come and see!” or “Follow me!” When he hears the call of Jesus and obeys, he comes into a situation where faith in Jesus Christ becomes possible and real! It is a risk to take the first step, but it is the only way possible to learn what “faith” really is! He who is called must go out of his situation in which he cannot believe and take the first step towards Jesus Christ into the situation in which he can begin to believe!

Summary. The call of Jesus Christ to discipleship creates the situation where faith becomes possible. Another way to say this is, “Faith comes by hearing the word (voice) of Jesus Christ.” Genuine and enduring faith begins with a step of obedience towards Jesus Christ. Only a person who obeys really believes! And only the person who believes, is really obedient. Faith becomes genuine in the act of obedience (James 2:22) and obedience becomes genuine obedience in the act of believing in Jesus Christ whom was sent by God (John 6:28-29).

5	PRAYER (8 minutes) [REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD
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Take turns in the group **to pray short** (in one or two sentences) 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 (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes) [ASSIGNMENT] 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.** Be committed to make disciples. Preach, teach or study the teaching of “Concepts of the gospel – part 2” together with another person or group of people.
2. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Genesis 16:1 – 19:29 each day. Make use of the questions method of quiet time. Make notes.
3. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. (2) Acts 5:12-42. Theme: The evangelistic task of the Church. 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 and teaching notes and this preparation.