

DISCIPLESHIP. LESSON 1

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 UNFATHOMABLE
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Definition.

What is “worship”? Worship is more than just singing songs of praise. The definition of “worship” is the following: 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”.

That is why during every worship time we will learn one characteristic (attribute) of God for which we worship him.

Meditation.

Worship is to stand in awe towards who God is.

Theme: God is unfathomable.

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

1. God’s limits are unfathomable. Yet people can know God.

Job 11:7-8. “Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens – what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave – what can you know?”

God is *unfathomable*. No one can probe the limits of the Almighty God. No one can know or understand everything there is to know concerning God. To “define” something means to describe the limits of that thing. To define God would mean to describe the limits of God. If someone could define what God is like, he would know the limits of God and thus be greater than God. The Bible teaches that God created us people with limitations. He defines our limits and knows everything about us. This fact ought to make us realise our place in creation. It ought to make us more humble in God’s presence.

But if no one can probe the limits of God or fathom the mysteries about God, is all knowledge about God impossible? Can we people know anything about God? Yes, people can know God, but only to the extent that he has revealed himself. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). What God has revealed about himself, people can repeat.

For example, God has revealed himself as one Divine Being in three distinguishable Persons. “The LORD (Hebrew: JaHWeH) our God is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4¹) and yet he revealed himself as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19²). No one can completely understand this revelation, but also not reject it! God revealed himself as the Father with whom people can have a confidential and trustful relationship. God has revealed himself as the Son through whom people can get to know God and get reconciled to God. And God has revealed himself as the Holy Spirit through whom people are born again and renewed, that is, become children of God.

2. God is invisible. Yet God reveals himself visibly to people.

John 4:24. “God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

God is Spirit and therefore invisible to human eyes. No man has seen God and no man can see God. No one can describe God’s being or personality, unless God himself reveals certain aspects of his being and personality.

Colossians 1:15. “He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God.”

Can we people see God? Yes, Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. The invisible and unlimited Almighty Spirit took on the weak and limited human nature in Christ and dwelt among human beings so that people were able to see him and get to know him. Jesus said, “He who has seen me, has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Thousands of people saw the person and life of Jesus Christ. What they recorded in the Bible helps us today to see and know Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we see and know the invisible God. In Jesus Christ, we can see God’s love and

¹ Deuteronomy 6:4. Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

² Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

mercy, God's holiness and righteousness, God's sovereign might and humility, God's truth and wisdom, in short, God's glory.

God's "glory" is the summary of all God's attributes (characteristics) or perfections, including his presence. Jesus Christ is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's being (Hebrews 1:3³). The invisible God in heaven revealed himself in and through the visible Jesus Christ on earth. "In Jesus Christ lives all the fullness of the Deity in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9⁴).

3. God is unapproachable. Yet God approaches us.

1 Timothy 6:16. "God ... who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see."

God lives in an *unapproachable* light. No one can approach God. No one can climb up to heaven to see or meet God by means of any human way or method or any religion! No one can forge a way to the invisible and unapproachable God! No man and no religion can by itself approach God!

God is not only invisible, but also unapproachable by any kind of human effort. No religion in the world can help us to approach the Living God, who revealed himself in the Bible!

While people by themselves cannot approach God, God has approached people through Jesus Christ! Only after rebirth can a Christian approach God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit! (Ephesians 2:18⁵; Hebrews 4:16⁶)

Conclusion. While no one can fathom God, his Being and Personality, his perfect attributes (characteristics) and presence, his eternal plan and motives, people can know God and know his thoughts TO THE EXTENT THAT HE HAS REVEALED THEM in the Bible, in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

Worship.

Take turns to worship God (in one or two sentences) in his characteristic as being the unfathomable God whom we may know personally.

3	TEACHING (70 minutes) [QUIET TIME] THE FAVOURITE TRUTH or CHOSEN BIBLE VERSE method of quiet time
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A. MOTIVATION

WHY IS A DAILY TIME OF FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST IMPORTANT?

The illustration about "eating together". *Read* Revelation 3:20.

1. Why do people like to eat together?

Eating together is a way of relating to one another. In the Bible "eating together" is a picture or an illustration of fellowship with one another. Jesus Christ does not want to stand outside the door of the church. He does not want to be excluded from the meetings of Christians in the church. He desires to come into your life and fellowship with you every day of your life. That is why he is knocking on the door: first of all the door of the church and secondly on the door of your heart.

When you hear his call and open your heart to him, he will certainly come into your life. The very first thing Jesus wants to do, is to personally fellowship with you. When you receive Jesus Christ, you receive no one less than God himself (Matthew 10:40; Colossians 1:15). Whoever fellowships with Jesus Christ, fellowships with God through his Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15).

2. What do you do when Jesus eats with you?

(1) What do people do when they eat together?

They do two things: they eat food and they talk to one another. To fellowship spiritually with Jesus Christ is exactly the same: you eat spiritual food and you talk to Jesus Christ.

(2) What does Jesus regard as spiritual food?

Read Matthew 4:4; John 4:34; 1 Peter 2:2. God speaks to you through the words in the Bible or through the Holy Spirit who causes you to hear the words of the Bible. Spiritual food is God's Word just as he has revealed it to us in the Bible. You begin to live when you eat the words in the Bible (when you do what is written in the Bible). God and you have fellowship when you receive his words into your mind and heart. You must learn to "eat" his words: to chew them, to swallow them and to digest them (Joshua 1:8; Mark 4:20). You begin to live spiritually when you begin to listen to what has been written in the Bible and when you do it.

³ Hebrews 1:3. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

⁴ Colossians 2:9. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

⁵ Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father

⁶ Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

(3) How do you talk to God?

Read Genesis 5:22; Psalm 62:8; Luke 11:1-4. You talk to God through prayer. Prayer consists of listening and responding. God (Jesus Christ) is fellowshiping with you and you with him when you listen to one another and talk to one another. You must learn how to listen to him and how to talk to him, that is, learn to read the Bible with understanding and learn to pray.

Christians do not pray as people in other religions do. Prayer is not a religious exercise. Christians do not have a collection of prescribed prayers which one must recite three or five times a day at set times together with prescribed outward prayer postures. For Christians, prayer is “walking with God” (Genesis 5:22), “friendship with God” (James 2:23) and “opening your heart to God” (Psalm 62:9). Prayer is a voluntary and delightful time of spiritual fellowship with the One and Only Living God through Jesus Christ.

In prayer God speaks personally to you and you respond to what he says. Or in prayer you pour out your heart, thoughts and feelings to God and he answers in his own time and surprising way. Learn to respond to what God says to you in the Bible. Learn to open up your heart and bring all that is in your heart before God. Prayer is part of the Christian lifestyle which you must learn. “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

3. In quiet time there is a shared responsibility.

Revelation 3:20 speaks first about *Jesus* eating with you and then about *you* eating with Jesus.

(1) First Jesus wants to eat with you.

Then you are the host and Jesus is the guest. Then it is your responsibility to give him what you have! But what do you really have to give to him? You can give him time and attention! You possess a will and you can give him your zeal, enthusiasm, dedication and submission. You possess a heart and you can share with him your worries, problems and all your sins! He really wants to share these things with you!

(2) Then Jesus invites you to eat with him.

He invites you into his holy presence to fellowship with him. Then he is the host and you are the guest! Then it is his responsibility to give you what he has! And what does Jesus Christ have that he can give to you? As a privileged guest you may expect that he will give to you what you really need that day. “The high priest we have sympathises with our weaknesses, because he has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

4. Eating together requires time.

(1) Eating together is a very important human custom.

How often do you eat every day? Most people eat two or three times a day. Some never stop eating. Why is it important to eat *regularly*? Because this is the only way to remain healthy and strong! You must eat to produce energy so that you are able to learn, work, exercise and play. You need to eat regularly, but also to eat healthy!

The illustration in Revelation 3:20 implies that Jesus regards regular fellowshiping with him as something very important. Try to eat with him at least once a day.

(2) This was also the habit of Jesus himself.

Read Isaiah 50:4-5; Mark 1:35. What was the custom of Jesus when he lived on earth? In the Old Testament, Jesus is called ‘the Servant of the LORD’ He is viewed in his human nature on earth in relationship to his heavenly Father in heaven. Isaiah 50 is a prophecy about Jesus Christ more than 700 years before his first coming. Every morning Jesus listened to what God said to him and every morning he spoke to God. Jesus thus had regular fellowship (quiet time) with God in the morning. Jesus was never rebellious against God and never drew back from God in fear.

(3) This was also the habit of a believing king.

Read Psalm 143:8,10; Psalm 1:1-2; Psalm 5:3. Which habit did king David have? In the morning king David expected to hear God’s words of love for him. He expected God to show him the way he should go that day. He expected to travel on a road on which he would not stumble. The words in the Bible showed him that. In his prayer he laid his request before God. Then he looked forward with expectation what God would do.

We call such a regular time of fellowship with God (Jesus Christ) “a quiet time”. Make this also your regular habit. “Eat” the words of God in the Bible and “talk” to God during your spiritual mealtime.

B. METHOD

HOW TO HAVE A REGULAR QUIET TIME

There are several methods of having a quiet time. This method is recommended if you do not have a quiet time. It has five simple steps and must be distinguished from “the five steps Bible study method”.

The favourite truth or chosen Bible verse method for quiet time

At the end of a meeting the group leader assigns 7 passages from the Bible from which everyone in the small group (house fellowship) has quiet time before the next meeting.

Step 1. Pray.

Begin your personal time with God by consciously entering into God's presence. Ask God to speak personally to you through his words in the Bible and his Spirit. Ask him to renew or strengthen your life through the words of the Bible. For example, you could pray, "LORD, open my eyes that I may see the wonderful things in your Word" (Psalm 119:18).

Step 2. Read.

Every day read one passage or half a chapter from the Bible. You may make use of a Bible reading programme. In the end of every Dota course you will find the preparation for the next meeting, including 3½ chapters from the Bible from which you have a quiet time before the next meeting. The intention is that all group members have quiet times from the same Bible passages. This makes sharing from the quiet times much more meaningful.

Step 3. Choose a truth or a Bible verse.

Your "favourite truth" may be a verse, a few verses, or especially one of the truths in the Bible passage that you have read. It is the thought or truth through which God is speaking to you, through which your thinking is stimulated or through which your heart is touched.

Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth (or chosen Bible verse).

Meditate on your favourite truth or chosen Bible verse. You meditate on God's Word because you want to understand the truth, receive renewal or strength from it, and apply or use it. Christian meditation has the following 4 parts:

(1) Think about the meaning of the different words in your favourite truth. Ask yourself questions like Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

(2) Pray to God while you think. Ask God to speak to your mind and your heart, to explain the meaning of a word to you or to reveal to you what he wants you *to know, believe, be or do*. Respond to what God is saying to you.

(3) Relate God's truth to your personal life or to the world in which you live. Ask yourself one of the following questions: "What is my need in the light of this truth?" "How does this truth renew or strengthen me?" "What does God want me to know or believe or be or do?"

(4) Write the most important thoughts of your meditation in your notebook for personal time with God.

Step 5. Pray your favourite truth (or chosen Bible verse).

Pray your favourite truth (the thought of your meditation) back to God. Pray *shortly* for four different people:

(1) Pray your favourite truth for **yourself**.

(2) Pray your favourite truth for **a family member**.

(3) Pray your favourite truth for **someone nearby** (in your neighbourhood, congregation or working place).

(4) Pray your favourite truth for **someone far away** (in another town or country).

C. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR QUIET TIME

1. Have a regular quiet time.

(1) How regular?

Have a regular quiet time – alone, with someone or together in a small group. You can have a quiet time with God in the morning, afternoon, evening or night.

(2) Which method?

Make use of the favourite truth or chosen Bible verse method of quiet time.

(3) Assigned Bible passages.

First make use of the assigned Bible passages at the end of each Dota lesson, so that every group member has quiet times from the same Bible passages. Thus you will better understand the sharing of quiet times. Later you may make use of the Bible reading programme (See manual 1, supplement 2).

(4) Bible marking system.

Also make use of a Bible marking system if you don't mind writing in your Bible. This is a system of symbols in the margin of your Bible that represent certain concepts. For example:

x = sin,

+ = the death of Christ on the cross

(See manual 1, supplement 3).

2. Record your quiet time notes.

Keep a notebook and make a habit of writing down the following:

- The date.
- The Bible reference of the passage you read for your personal time with God.
- The Bible reference of your favourite truth.
- All the important truths God wants you to remember or share.
- Record eventually your prayer or application.

Your notebook for your personal time with God will help you to share with others what you have learned. It will help you to remember what God said to you in the past. When you read these notes later, you may see a pattern in how God is leading you. You will experience God answering prayers! You will become convinced that God is really involved in your life!

3. Share one of your quiet times in the group.

During every meeting of your discipleship group, share one of the quiet times you had during the past one or two weeks. Choose which quiet time you would like to share before you come to the meeting. You may just want to read what you have written down.

4. Have a quiet time as a group together.

Form a small group who meet together regularly to have a quiet time as a group. The small group may consist of some friends or some of your believing family members. Some Christians meet early in the morning before they go to work to have a quiet time together or to pray together.

Have a quiet time two by two and then share in the whole group or have a quiet time as group together.

After everyone has shared, take turns to pray a short prayer, so that everyone has a chance to pray.

If time remains, someone may like to share a personal testimony about a difficult or a joyous event, about his conversion, a change in his life, an answer to prayer or God's guidance.

A group may like to share their quiet times with one another via the Internet.

Examples of writing down your quiet time:

3rd July, 2016 – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Chosen Bible Verse or Favourite Truth:

1 Thessalonians 1:3: We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Meditation:

I want my faith in Jesus Christ to be visible in my actions. I want my love for God and my neighbour to be a daily experience. Then my hope (expectations) will not fail!

My prayer:

*(for myself) Lord, help me today to show my faith in what I say and do.

*(for a family member). I ask that you give my sister's faith hands and feet.

*(for someone nearby). Please draw my friend, Peter, with your love to yourself so that he may believe in you.

*(for someone far away). Make the faith of the small congregation in country X attractive for their neighbours

4th July, 2016 – 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20

Chosen Bible Verse or Favourite Truth:

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12. "For you know that we dealt with each as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

Meditation:

A Christian is for some people "a spiritual mother" (verse 7) who tenderly cares for his needs. But for other people "a spiritual father" (verse 11) who encourages and urges him on. I want to be an encourager to people

My prayer:

*(for myself) help me to encourage someone today.

*(for a family member). Let me encourage my brother to share the gospel with someone.

*(for someone nearby). Remind my colleague John to encourage his despondent teenage son.

*(for someone far away). Do encourage my brothers in country X where they are persecuted to shine as lights in the darkness.

4	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] A PRACTICAL EXERCISE. MATTHEW 3:1-12
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Make use of your chosen Bible verse or favourite truth method of quiet time and have a quiet time as a group from Matthew 3:1-12.

(1) Pray.

The group leader prays a short prayer.

(2) Read.

The group leader asks someone to read Matthew 3:1-12.

(3) Choose a Bible Verse or Favourite Truth.

Everyone chooses a Bible verse or favourite truth from this passage.

(4) Meditate your Bible Verse or Favourite Truth

Meditate on it for about 2 minutes and record at least one thought.

Take turns around the circle and let everyone share (or read) his recorded thought.

(5) Pray your Bible verse or Favourite Truth

Pray two by two a short prayer about your own chosen Bible verse or favourite truth for yourself, for a family member, for someone nearby and for someone far away.

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 for one another and others (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. Make a commitment to have a regular personal time of fellowship with God (quiet time) – even if it is only seven minutes long. Choose to have a quiet time at the best time of your day.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Matthew 4:12 – 7:29** each day. Make use of the favourite truth or chosen Bible verse method. Make short notes.
3. Bible study. Prepare the first Bible study at home. (1) **Luke 8:4-15**. Theme: How do I respond to God's Word?
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook. Include the worship notes, the teaching notes and this preparation.