

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 15

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 THE PEACEMAKER
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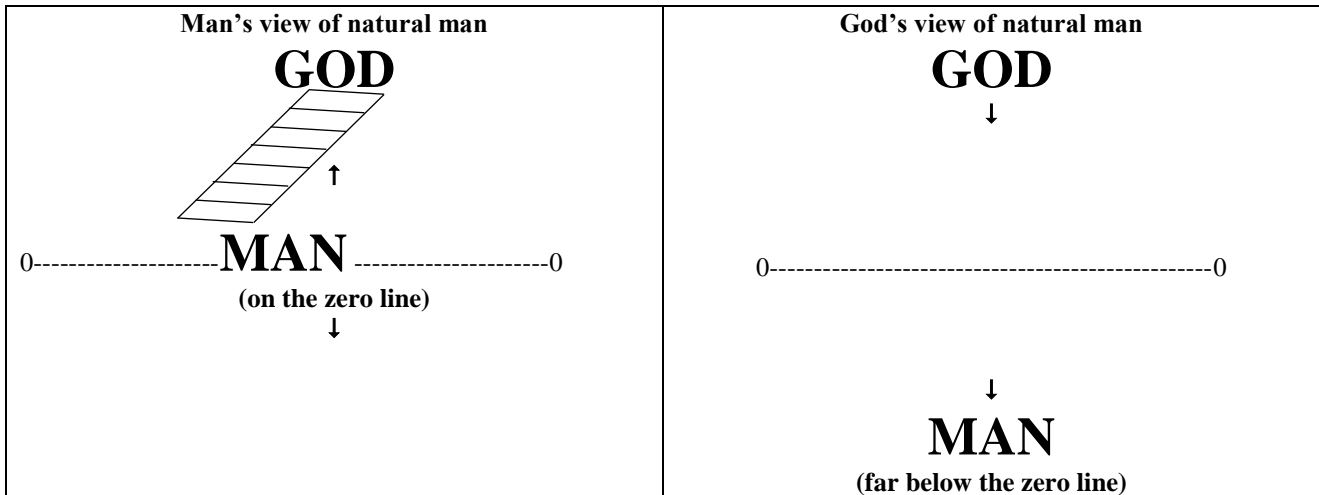
Meditation.

Theme: God is the Peacemaker.

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

1. Natural man stands under God’s wrath.

(1) Illustration about the position of natural (even religious) man.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every person is <i>born without sin</i>. Natural man stands on the neutral line! • Every person can with his <i>free will</i> and <i>own effort</i> earn his own righteousness or salvation in this life. • In this view natural man <i>can never be sure</i> that he would be saved, because it all depends whether the scales in the final judgement would tip in his favour or not. It all depends on whether his good works or religious acts are good enough! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every person is <i>born in sin</i> (Job 14:4; 15:14,16; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12) and falls far short of God’s requirements (Romans 3:23)! Natural man “misses God’s goal” (to bear the image of God) and therefore stands far below the neutral line under God’s wrath! • Natural man with his so-called free will <i>does not and cannot</i> submit to God or God’s Word (Romans 8:7-8). Only Jesus Christ has earned man’s righteousness and salvation at his first coming (Romans 5:8). A person can only receive God’s righteousness with empty hands. • In this view every believer in Christ can be absolutely sure that he is saved (John 10:28). God has declared him 100% righteous and thereafter regards and treats him as 100% righteous in his eyes. He is saved by grace through faith. |
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(2) Biblical facts about Man (Write on whiteboard)

- **God’s righteous wrath (hatred, enmity) towards the life-style of natural man.**
Read Psalm 5:4-6; 11:5; Isaiah 63:10; John 3:36; Romans 1:18; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 3:5-9.
- **Natural man’s unrighteous hostile attitude towards God.**
Read Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21.
- **God’s unthinkable and undeserved love towards us.**
Read Romans 5:1-2,6,8-10; Ephesians 2:12-14; Colossians 1:19-22.

(3) What does it mean to be “God’s enemies” (Romans 5:10)?

In their natural state, all people are “separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in God’s people, foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world, far away, darkened in their understanding and separate from the life of God” (Ephesians 2:12-13; 4:18). This state of estrangement was not due to ignorance or innocence. There simply are no ignorant and innocent heathen! In their natural state, all people are alienated from God and hostile in disposition, as is shown by their wicked works” (Colossians 1:21). It is their own fault that they remain far away from God, because they actually hate (that is, “not prefer”)¹ God and are hostile to God. When God to a certain extent makes himself known to them through his revelation in nature and history and in their heart and conscience, they in their hostility “suppress or exchange the truth by their godlessness and wickedness” (Romans 1:18-23; Romans 2:14-15). Their inner disposition of aversion to God, their antipathy to the voice of conscience and their suppression of facts in nature and history reveals itself in their wicked deeds, which are enumerated in Colossians 3:5-9. Their inexcusable hostility, as shown in their wicked lives, merits God’s anger or wrath (Romans 1:18; Colossians 3:6). Thus, in their natural state, all people are sinners (Romans 3:23) and “children of God’s wrath” (Ephesians 2:3).

2. Peace is necessary in three relationships.

(1) GOD first makes peace with MAN.

In our natural state, before we were born-again, God regarded us as people standing in the wrong relationship to him and doing the wrong things. Instead of being “bearers of God’s image” (Genesis 1:17-18) God’s image has been twisted in natural man. Therefore God was angry with us. God’s anger or wrath is directed against all the godlessness and wickedness of people in the world (Romans 1:18)! God’s anger or wrath remains on all people that do not believe in Jesus Christ or do not obey Jesus Christ (John 3:18,36). The word “enemies” (Romans 5:10) stands parallel to the words “ungodly” (Romans 5:6) and “sinners” (Romans 5:8).

However, God’s anger or wrath is never accompanied by feelings of hatred or deeds of injustice. God’s wrath and enmity always remains holy and completely righteous (just). It is never ‘sinful’ (Ephesians 4:26). Righteousness (justice) and love are in complete harmony with one another only in the divine nature of God!

God’s “love” is expressed in the fact that he took the first step to win us back to him and make peace with us! It is not us, but God who takes the initiative to make peace with us! The sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross took the holy and righteous (just) anger and enmity (hatred) of God against our sin (godlessness, wickedness) away! The sacrifice of atonement satisfied God’s holiness and righteousness, pacified God’s wrath against us and our sins and thereby caused God to reconcile himself to us. Through the cross of Jesus Christ God made peace with us. God no longer regards or treats us as unrighteous. God is no longer angry with us! God has first made peace with us!

(2) Then only can MAN make peace with GOD.

When we receive Jesus Christ and his sacrifice of atonement, we make peace with God. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we also experience this peace (Romans 5:1-2). By faith we accept that God through Jesus Christ has made peace with us and was reconciled to us, so that we may make peace with God and may be reconciled to him. The Holy Spirit applies Christ’s completed work of salvation in the past to the lives of believers in the present. The peace in our minds and hearts is the fruit of the Holy Spirit living in our bodies (Galatians 5:22-23). Then we are no longer hostile and hateful in our disposition towards God. Then we no longer regard God as an enemy, but fellowship with him as a Friend. Thus, we can only make peace with God when God has first made peace with us!

(3) Finally, MEN on earth can make peace with one another.

It is only after we have personally experienced how God has made peace with us that we are able to make peace with our enemies on earth. Before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the ceremonial law caused the Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) to be enemies of one another. On social and religious grounds the Jews and Gentiles were one another’s enemies. Their social and religious laws and customs made it impossible for them to live together in peace.

But the death of Jesus Christ on the cross has *changed* the law (Hebrews 7:12)! Jesus Christ *fulfilled* the demands and ritual regulations of the law (Matthew 5:17), *cancelled* them (Colossians 2:14) and *abolished* them (Ephesians 2:15). Only by believing in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ becomes the Peacemaker between nations and cultures that previously were enemies (Ephesians 2:14-18). When Jews (Hindu’s, Buddhists and Muslims, etc.) make peace with the God of the Bible through Jesus Christ, they can also make peace with one another! The fact that people, nations and religions cannot make peace with one another only proves that they have not yet made peace with the God of the Bible! Jesus expects Christians to live in peace with people who continue to be hostile to them. He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). And Paul says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

3. Peace consists of two parts.

The word “peace” in the Bible has two important meanings.

¹ Compare Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37.

(1) Peace is the absence of something bad.

Peace is *the absence* of outward quarrelling and war. Peace is also *the absence* of inward anger, irritation, fear, incited feelings, moral conflicts, etc. Most of the time the people in the world associate the word “peace” only with this absence of fighting and war.

(2) Peace is the presence of something good.

Peace is the presence of wholeness. Peace makes whole what formerly was broken. Peace is the restoration of a broken relationship; the resumption of a broken off goal in life; the healing of hurt feelings; and bringing about what God deems necessary. For example, when you feel “broken” because a beloved died, or because you lived a very sinful life in the past, God can make you completely “whole” again as if the sad event had never taken place! God is a better “father” or “mother” or “parent” or “child” or “friend” than any earthly father, mother, parent, child or friend! God not only forgives your sins, but also removes the consequences of your sins! He not only removes the enmity and the brokenness, but restores perfect healing! God is not only the Great Peacemaker, but also the Great Healer (Whole Maker)!

4. Peace is based on truth, not on feelings.

Read John 8:31-32,36.

(1) Truth is eternal.

The truths in the Bible are the only steadfast basis for a lasting peace. Only God’s truths in the Bible can set you free from all the things that bind your thoughts, feelings, acts and relationships in life.

(2) Feelings are changeable.

Your feelings however, vary due to changing circumstances. Your lack of peace in your heart is not always based on truth. For example, your low self-esteem or fear that God will not care for you is based on lies of Satan (John 8:44; Ephesians 6:16).

Your lack of peace is sometimes unavoidable. For example, when you do something that is right in God’s eyes, it can still create great opposition from people who hate what you do. Opposition, ridicule and persecution are not situations of peace and can cause feelings of dismay, discouragement and even fear within Christians. That is why Christians must learn to distinguish between a deep inward peace based on what God says and an outward lack of peace based on the enmity of people or difficult circumstances.

However, when a Christian does something that is wrong in God’s eyes, like unbelief, disobedience or postponement of what God wants him to be or do, it will only result in a lack of peace in his feelings and relationships. Only confession of sin and a renewed submission to the God of the Bible can free you from what binds you and restore the deep inner peace again. God is not only the Great Peacemaker, but also the Great Liberator!

Worship.

Take turns to worship God (in one or two sentences) in his characteristic as being the Peacemaker, Healer and Liberator! Worship God for making peace with you, healing you or liberating you.

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] ACTS 1:1 – 4:22
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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 (Acts 1:1 – 4:22).

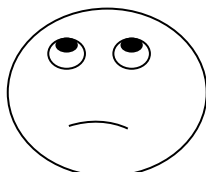
Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	[CHRISTIAN CHARACTER] A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN SELF-ESTEEM
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A. WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF THEMSELVES

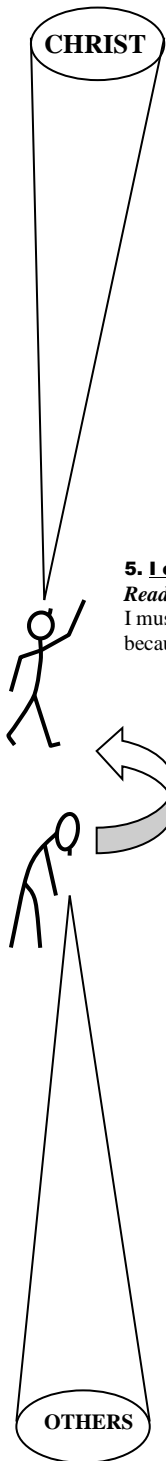
Self-esteem is the estimation of your value. Many people say, “I don’t like myself” or “My life has no value.” How valuable do you regard yourself? How worthy do you judge yourself? Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion about yourself? Do you feel inferior to other people? Do you feel that your life has no purpose?

What does the Bible teach about self-esteem?



B. FOCUS ON JESUS CHRIST

(Whenever you draw this illustration, follow the order of the numbers:
First, numbers 1 to 3 downwards, then number 4 in the middle and finally numbers 5 to 7 upwards).



7. My character becomes more and more Christ-like.

Read Ephesians 5:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. **Question.** How do I become Christ-like?
By imitating Christ, I live a life of love. By continuing to reflect Christ, I am continually changed more and more into Christ's likeness.

6. I gain self-esteem by growing as a Christian.

• **Read** Isaiah 43:4 and Jeremiah 29:11. **Question.** What is God's evaluation of me?
I am precious in the eyes of God. I am honoured and loved by God.
God has a meaningful plan for my life!
By believing what God says about me, my evaluation of myself changes positively.

▪ **Read** Colossians 2:6-7. **Question.** How do getting 'rooted' and 'built up' in Christ make you grow in self-esteem?
By growing to maturity in Christ, my 'roots' (my security: I feel that I am loved unconditionally by God!) grow deeper and deeper, and my 'building' (my significance: I know that my life is very meaningful to God) rises higher and higher.

▪ **Read** Hebrews 10:24-25. **Question.** What is the contribution of brothers and sisters?
By meeting together regularly with other believers, my love for God, for others and for myself grows continually in depth, and my good works (my tasks in God's kingdom) grow continually in influence.

5. I concentrate on Christ and no more on the things of the world.

Read Colossians 3:1-4, 23-24. **Question.** What should my focus be?
I must stop focusing on people and things on earth and instead focus on Christ, and on living and working for Christ, because I know that my future destiny is to appear with Christ in glory and to receive my eternal inheritance.

4. I change my focus.

Read 1 John 1:8-9. **Question.** How do I change from the wrong focus to the right focus?
Comparing myself with other people (or with my ideal self) is sin. The many results of such comparing are sins.
I change my focus by confessing my sin and by receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing.

1. I compare myself to another person (or to 'my ideal self')

This results in the following *negative feelings and thoughts*:
I may either feel *inferior* (less than the other person)

- I *don't like* myself
- I'm *dissatisfied* how God made me
- I'm *jealous* of what he possesses
- I *fear* what he might think of me
- I'm *critical* of my own shortcomings and put myself down
- I *avoid* him because I *fear* that he will hurt and reject me

- I try to *please* him so that he will like and accept me

or *superior* (better than the other person).

- or I *don't like* him.
- or I am *proud and brag* about myself.
- or I *look down* on what he has.
- or I *don't care* what he thinks about me.
- or I'm *critical* of his shortcomings and put him down.
- or I am *insensitive and tactless* and don't care if I hurt or reject him.
- or I am *authoritarian and demand* (expect) that he pleases me, etc.

2. I become worse every time I meet this person.

Every time I meet this person,
I become *more insecure and negative* about myself
in my speech and behaviour towards other people, etc.
This process gets worse all the time.

or I *become more arrogant and overbearing*
in my speech and behaviour towards other people, etc.

3. My character becomes exactly like I feel and think.

Finally I become exactly like I have been feeling and thinking about myself. I even become like that other person.

Read Galatians 6:7-8. **Question.** What principle forms my character?

The principle is: When I continually sow certain thought- and behaviour patterns,
then I will reap a similar kind of character.

Continually sowing *inferior* thoughts and behaviour
results in an *insecure, fearful and dissatisfied* character.

I will despise myself and fear other people.
I will have a low self-esteem.

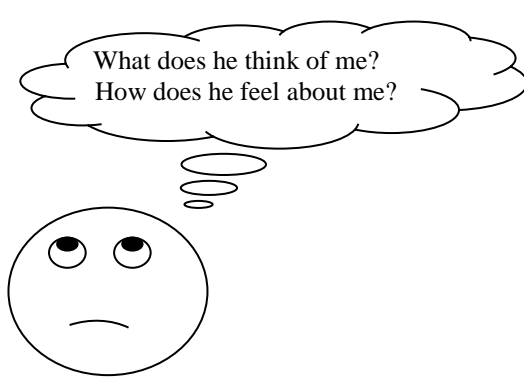
Continually sowing *superior* thoughts and behaviour
results in an *arrogant, proud, insensitive and obnoxious*
character.

I will despise and dominate others.
I will have a wrong or inflated self-esteem.

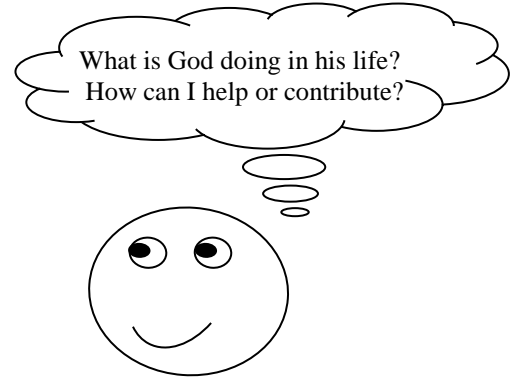
Summary.

**Do not compare yourself to other people, but focus on Christ!
Love God (Christ) with all your mind, heart and strength.**

C. FOCUS ON GOD'S PURPOSES



**The self-directed person.
Mr. "I am in the centre".**



**The other-directed person.
Mr. "Focus on God's purposes in the other person".**

What does God command you to do?

Read Philippians 2:3-5,20-21.

Notes. God commands you to concentrate on God's purposes in other people, not just on your own interests. When you are pre-occupied with yourself, ask yourself the question, "Why am I focused on myself?"

Of course, anyone can sometimes be occupied with his own problems or hurt feelings. Then he needs the attention and love of others. Then he should ask for such attention and help, so that afterwards he can give himself to others again.

Summary. **Do not focus on yourself, but on God's purposes in other people.
Love your neighbour as yourself.**

D. FOCUS ON GOD'S TRUTHS

1. You are a wonderful creation of God.

How wonderful did God create you?

Read Psalm 139:14.

Notes. Consider especially how wonderful are some of the parts of your body. Discuss:

- the human eyes or hands.
- the human spirit (with the ability to know God)
- the human conscience (the ability to know right and wrong)
- the human intuition (the ability to sense for example danger)
- the human creativity (the ability to invent and make new things).

Share. What things do you not like about yourself?

Lesson. Disliking the way God made you results in a disability to trust God. But accepting the way God made you, results in the ability to trust God.

2. With God you lack no good thing.

What things do you feel you lack?

Read Psalm 23:1; 34:10.

Discuss. What do you do when you feel that you lack something?

For example: food and shelter, or protection and rest, or help in the valley of death, or help against an enemy, or help in contacting and fellowshiping with God.

Discuss. Discuss the various human ways of compensating for deficiencies, like covering up, working hard, overdoing, addiction, buying things, acting, etc. Compare these with spiritual ways of meeting deficiencies, like prayer, praise, contentment, thankfulness, etc.

Lesson. Continually concentrating on things you imagine you lack, results in the wrong priorities. But concentrating on things you have in Christ results in the right priorities.

3. With God you need no one or nothing else to enhance your self-esteem.

What do you do in order to meet your need of acceptance by other people?

Read Galatians 1:10; Jeremiah 17:5-8.

Discuss. How do human tendencies like giving in to peer-pressure, pleasing others, compensating one's social shortcomings with materialism, or fleeing away from people into activities disqualify you from serving Christ?

Lesson. Not loving others or loving others for the wrong reasons disqualifies you from serving Christ. Continually concentrating on self (-acceptance), results in fruitlessness. But when Christ is the ‘Fountain’ of your life (cf. Psalm 36:9; John 7:37-39) or your ‘Vine’ (John 15:5), you will bear much fruit!

Summary.

**Do not believe in the values of the world,
but focus on God’s truths and values in the Bible.**

Love God’s Word

because “the Bible makes you wiser than your enemies,
gives you more insight than all your teachers
and more understanding than the elders”
(Psalm 119:97-100)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[REACTIONS] 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)	[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 “Christian self-esteem” together with another person or group of people.
2. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Acts 4:23 – 7:60** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. (2) **John 15:13-15.** Theme: “The Christian relationship to friends.” 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.