

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 23

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 GRACIOUS
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Meditation.

Theme: God is gracious.

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

1. The traditions of the Pharisees.

Read Mark 7:1-23. The Pharisees were very “religious”. They prayed three times every day, fasted two days every week, gave one tenth of even their smallest possessions to the temple and tried to keep 613 requirements, rules and laws that they themselves had made. The Pharisees were very religious¹, but they were not free! They were:

- slaves to sin (John 8:34)
- and slaves to their own man-made rules or laws (Isaiah 29:13)!

2. The traditions of some modern Christians.

Read Mark 7:7. “They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

In the same way, some Christian congregations prescribe rules as for example:

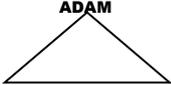
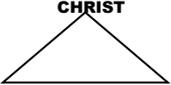
- People must follow a particular course before they can be admitted as members. They may not do any work or buy on Sunday. They must come to the church every day and get involved. Or they must attend two worship services on Sunday.
- Only people educated in theology at their own school of theology may lead the worship service. They must follow certain prescribed liturgies. They must sing and pray in a prescribed way. They prescribe the celebration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Their dress-code is strictly prescribed. They must give at least a certain percentage of their income to their own congregation.
- During the week they may not drink or eat particular things. They must always obey their pastor and elders. They must believe particular doctrines that are not clearly based on the Bible. Sometimes they are even forced to go out on propaganda campaigns, etc.

Although these requirements are NOT taught in the Bible, some Christian congregations produce new requirements, new rules or new laws for their members, which move their members from the world of “I *want* to live under God’s grace” into the world of “I *must* live under the man-made laws of the congregation”.

3. Being legally under law or under grace.

Read John 1:16-17; Romans 5:12,17-18; Romans 6:5-7,11-14.

The Bible teaches that Christians “are not under law, but under grace!”

<p>LIVING LEGALLY UNDER THE LAW</p> <p>ADAM</p>  <p>- Because God is perfectly holy and righteous, he demands that all people should be perfectly holy and righteous as well and that all trespassing of this law and other moral laws should be punished.</p> <p>- Because all people are sinners, they fall short of the God’s righteousness. Also people who think that they are righteous fall hopelessly short!</p>	<p>LIVING LEGALLY UNDER GRACE</p> <p>CHRIST</p>  <p>- But because God is also perfectly loving, gracious and merciful, he himself made atonement for the sins of those people who believe in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24-25). Jesus Christ has fulfilled God’s demand of perfect righteousness in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).</p> <p>- Because Jesus Christ bore the punishment for sins in the place of Christians, God’s wrath against their sins has been removed and they have been reconciled to God forever (Romans 8:1)!</p>
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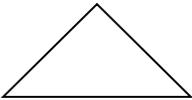
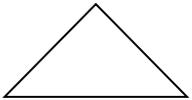
¹ The Pharisees fast twice a week and give a tenth of all they get (Luke 18:12). They do everything for men to see. They love the most important seats in the synagogues, they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them “rabbi”. They give a tenth of unimportant herbs, but neglect the important matters such as justice, mercy and faithfulness. They clean the outside of a cup, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. They venerate prophets and decorate their tombs (Matthew 23:1-36), but condemn Jesus Christ to death and hand him over to be killed (Matthew 20:17-19).

The Jewish religion is still a religion of the law (Hebrew: Torah, Arabic: sharia).

- All people, who are connected to Adam by birth, stand under God's demand to be righteous (the law). They live legally under God's law (his requirement to be perfectly righteous) and are still slaves of sin and death.	- All people who are connected to Jesus Christ by faith, are completely justified. They no longer live legally under God's law (legal requirement), but under God's grace (the fulfilment of God's requirement to be righteous)!
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In order to encourage Christians to fight against sin, the apostle Paul teaches that people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ should no longer live under the rule of sin in them or outside them. They no longer live under the law, that is, under God's demand (requirement) that people should be perfectly righteous, but live under God's grace, that is, under the fact that Jesus Christ has earned this perfect righteousness in their place. With empty hands (that is, as an undeserved gift) they have received (accepted) this perfect righteousness. All people who still live under the law², that is, under God's requirement to be perfectly righteous, have not been justified, are not forgiven, have not been reconciled to God and can also not be sanctified! But all people who live under grace, that is, under the fact that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17), are already perfectly forgiven, justified and reconciled to God (1 Corinthians 1:30). They CANNOT, DO NOT WANT TO and SHALL NOT continue to live in sin (Romans 6:5-7)! In order to live holy, a person must be justified first.

4. Being *emotionally* under law or under grace.

LIVING EMOTIONALLY UNDER THE LAW OF SOME CHURCHES	LIVING EMOTIONALLY UNDER GRACE OF CHRIST
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because some Christians and some churches prescribe or demand certain man-made rules which Christians must adhere to, these Christians feel that they are not free, but have to keep these man-made rules in order to be (feel) accepted by them. They live (and suffer) emotionally under these man-made laws. - If they do not keep these man-made laws, they are regarded as <i>disobedient</i> Christians, <i>unspiritual</i> Christians or even <i>bad</i> Christians³. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because Christians who have in the past lived emotionally under man-made (church-made) laws, have consciously chosen to live legally <u>and emotionally</u> under God's grace, they are not only legally free, but also <u>feel emotionally free</u> from these man-made laws (rules, traditions). - Even though they are not yet perfect in how they live as Christians, they continue to regard themselves as perfectly justified and feel perfectly righteous in God's eyes. They feel completely loved by God, no matter what other people may think or say.

When some Christians or churches draw up man-made religious laws (rules, traditions) which their members must keep, they turn these previous free Christians again into slaves of people! All such man-made religious laws, rules and traditions bring Christians again under the law! These Christians feel that they are compelled to keep these laws in order not to be shunned (avoided) and even rejected by these Christians, but to be (and feel) accepted. They feel "guilty" and "shamed" in the presence of these people. These man-made religious laws, rules and traditions give Christians no choice how they might live.

When Christians do not keep these man-made religious laws (rules, traditions), they hear that other Christians do not love them! Thus, in order to avoid such feelings of guilt, shame and loneliness, these Christians eagerly keep these religious laws.

When they live emotionally under the law (the man-made religious laws), they concentrate on WHO THEY ARE IN THE EYES OF these leaders and churches who drew up these religious laws. The Bible warns, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10)!

But the Bible clearly teaches that the legal position of Christians is "that Christians are no longer under the law, but are under God's grace". Christians no longer stand under God's demand (requirement) to be 100% righteous, because they are already regarded as 100% righteous, forgiven, saved". Christians are no longer under the law that condemns (dooms) them, because God regards them as being clothed with the perfect righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17,21; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

Being 100% justified (saved), Christians live the justified (saved) life according to the moral laws (Ten Commandments) of God. Christians need not and should not live any longer "emotionally under man-made religious laws". When Christians have committed sin in the eyes of God, they need not believe or feel that God no longer loves them or that Christians would shun (avoid, reject) them.

The consequence for a Christian committing a sin is not that God would condemn (doom, punish, avoid or reject) him, but that his fellowship with God is temporarily broken. By confessing his sin, his relationship with God is immediately restored and he may continue to live under God's grace!

Christians always have the freedom to choose how they want to live as Christians. They are free to choose to live emotionally under man-made laws or to live emotionally under God's continual grace. They may choose to feel

² Law = torah (Hebrew) or sharia (Arabic)

³ People who do not keep to certain man-made religious laws (like wearing a head shawl) are regarded as "unbelievers" and are in some cases even killed.

condemned, shunned and rejected or to feel loved and accepted. Christians are *legally* free and will never be condemned (doomed)(John 5:24; Romans 8:1), but must also choose to be (feel) *emotionally* free! They may choose to be completely free from feelings of guilt and shame. They must not occupy themselves with the judgements and condemnations of some people (Christians) who shun (avoid, reject) them. Christians need not live any longer in fear of what other people think or say about them.

When Christians live emotionally under God's grace, they concentrate on WHAT THEY DO to God and other people. *They remain forever who they are:* children of God who are perfectly justified in Christ! But they must immediately confess their sins and loveless behaviour, receive God's forgiveness and continue to fellowship with God and healthy Christians (1 John 1:9). Due to the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ, everyone who believes in Jesus Christ may live legally and emotionally under God's grace!

Worship

Take turns to worship God (in one or two sentences) in his characteristic as being gracious!

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] ROMANS 9 - 12
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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 (Romans 9 - 12).

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

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	[DISCIPLESHIP] CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE
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Read every Bible passage and discover and discuss what "a disciple" is according to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. THE MEANING OF THE WORD "DISCIPLE" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. A disciple is an "adherent" of a teacher.

Read Mark 2:18; Luke 6:17; John 6:60,66; John 9:28.

Notes. Philosophers and religious leaders in ancient times had "disciples" in the sense of "adherents". The Pharisees had disciples. John the Baptist had disciples. And Jesus had a large crowd of disciples. The word "disciple" in these passages means *adherent*, someone belonging to, associating with or following a particular teacher or group leader. However, although many people followed Jesus in the beginning, later they stopped to follow him. This was because they were only interested in the miracles of Jesus, but not in true discipleship. They were unwilling to pay the cost of true discipleship.

2. A disciple is a "Christian".

Read all the Bible passages. The followers of Jesus Christ were called the following:

- "disciples" (Acts 6:7; 14:21-22)
- "the Nazarene sect" (Acts 24:5)
- the followers of "the Way" (Acts 9:1-2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22)
- "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

Notes. In the early history of the Christian Church, people believing in Jesus Christ were sometimes called *adherents of the Way*. Most often they were called *disciples* in the sense of "members of a religious community" which almost had the same meaning as "Christians".

3. A disciple has *specific characteristics*.

Jesus Christ teaches us that genuine disciples of Jesus Christ are followers and learners that have specific characteristics. These characteristics have been recorded in the Bible. Example: A genuine disciple of Jesus Christ gives the first place in his life to Jesus Christ. He lives according to his teachings. He prays according to his will. He loves others as he is loved by Jesus. He bears much and lasting fruit, thus glorifying God the Father. By developing these characteristics, born-again Christians become true disciples, that is, mature, functioning and persevering Christians.

B. THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

Introduce. A disciple is a learner and follower of Jesus Christ with specific characteristics.

1. A true disciple of Jesus personally *believes* in Jesus Christ.

Read Mark 1:15-17; John 12:34-36; (Luke 16:8; John 3:16-21).

Notes. A disciple has “repented” (changed his thinking/mind) (Greek: metanoéo), believes the gospel and follows Jesus Christ. A disciple is a believer. People who believe in the Light “are sons of light⁴ and continually walk in the light”. A disciple does not merely follow a particular teacher called Jesus, but believes with all his heart, mind and life in Jesus Christ as he has revealed himself in the Bible and in what he has accomplished by his life, death and resurrection.

“Life” summarises the invisible attributes of God and “light” the visible revelation of these attributes (John 1:3-4). A disciple is “a son of the light” (Luke 16:8; cf. Matthew 5:14), because he believes that Jesus Christ is “the Light of the world” (John 8:12). He believes that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) – that Jesus Christ is God, who without letting go of his divine nature took on the human nature and came to live among people on earth (John 1:1,14). He believes who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done: that Jesus Christ died in his place, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. He believes that he has been justified completely by God’s grace (Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. A true disciple of Jesus follows Jesus Christ.

Read John 1:35-46; Mark 3:13-15; (Luke 5:1-11).

Notes. The word “disciple” in these passages means a follower of Jesus Christ. Note the invitation of Jesus, “Come and see” and: “Follow me”. The call to discipleship was a call to be “with him (Jesus)” wherever he went. The powerful and direct impression of the person of Jesus, together with his powerful teaching and mighty works impelled people to become disciples or followers of Jesus.

The call of Jesus to discipleship had no social barriers. Among his disciples were Jews and non-Jews, sinful fishermen, like Peter, James and John, a political zealot, called Simon (Acts 1:13) and a despised tax collector, called Matthew (Matteüs 9:9).

3. A true disciple of Jesus learns from Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 6:40.

Notes. The word “disciple” in this passage means a learner (Greek: mathétés) Jesus Christ called people to learn from him (Matthew 11:28-30). He said literally, “Everyone fully trained⁵ will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). The word “disciple” here means “student, apprentice (someone who apprehends, understands and is equipped to perform a craft)”. People from different segments of society followed Jesus for about three years as his student, apprentice. They had to be followers and learners before they could become teachers and equipped mentors. They had to be trainees before they could become trainers. Genuine disciples are followers and learners of Jesus Christ. Jesus calls them to follow him (*Read* Luke 5:1-11) and to learn from him as they follow. “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

A disciple learns by seeing, hearing and imitating (John 13:13-15; Matthew 4:23; Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 4:13; Philippians 4:9-12). He learns from Jesus as he follows Jesus. He observes the life and ministry of Jesus from nearby. He learns from both the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ and his apostles. He also learns through practising the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 7:24; Philippians 4:9). He gains experience by practising much.

4. A true disciple of Jesus obeys Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Read John 8:31-32.

Notes. A “disciple” obeys Jesus Christ. He does not believe whatever he likes, but “remains⁶ in the words of Jesus”. This he does by (1) hearing, (2) reading, (3) studying, (4) meditating, (5) memorising, (6) obeying and (7) passing on the words of Jesus.

A disciple is a person “called to the obedience that comes from faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26). A disciple “sees to it that no one takes him captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles (elementary teachings) of this (non-Christian) world” (Colossians 2:8). He does not believe arbitrary religious teachings, philosophical theories and scientific statements that exclude God. He never “goes beyond what is written” in the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:6). He is not free to do whatever he wants, but free to do what Christ teaches and commands (Galatians 5:13). Obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ includes social action towards the poor, oppressed and destitute (Matthew 25:34-36; cf. James 1:27).

5. A true disciple of Jesus is a servant.

Read John 12:26; John 13:13-15; (Mark 13:34; 1 Corinthians 3:9).

Notes. A disciple serves God and other people. The call to discipleship was a call to work together with Jesus Christ in his task on earth. A genuine servant is willing to do tasks that other people are unwilling or unable to do. He is even willing to do the tasks of the lowest slaves in the households of those days, namely, washing the dirty feet of travellers. Every disciple gets his own assigned task in the kingdom of God on earth.

⁴ Greek: huiioi fótos

⁵ Greek: katartizó (perfect, passive)

⁶ Greek: menó (lives, dwells, perseveres)

6. A true disciple of Jesus shows love in his relationships.

Read John 13:34-35 (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Notes. A disciple loves his brothers and sisters as Christ loves him. God proved his great love for the disciples by giving Jesus Christ to die in their place (Romans 5:8). This love he also gives through his Spirit to the disciples to give to others (Romans 5:5). This love is self-sacrificial as the love of Jesus Christ (John 15:13). Love is patient and kind, does not envy, does not boast and is not proud. Love is not rude, does not hurt people, is not selfish and is not easily angered (or irritated). Love does not keep a record of wrongs, but is forgiving. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth and with the progress others make with regard to the truth. This love bears with difficult people and difficult circumstances, trusts people except when people break this trust and expects that God can and will change people and circumstances. This love perseveres to do its best for God and for other people (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

7. A true disciple of Jesus remains in Jesus Christ.

Read John 15:4-6.

Notes. A disciple (John 15:8) has accepted Jesus Christ into his heart and life and remains (lives, perseveres) in Jesus Christ. A true disciple exerts himself to continually develop his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A disciple submits himself and his whole life to Jesus Christ and his teachings. But this relationship with Christ must be genuine. A superficial, formal or outward relationship with Jesus Christ will like a dry and dead branch on a vine be thrown into the fire and burned (John 15:6). Nominal Christians are not Christians at all! Jesus teaches that a person “must be born again” (John 3:7) and that “apart from him a person can do nothing that lasts” (John 15:5).

8. A true disciple of Jesus is being governed and transformed by the words of Jesus Christ.

Read John 15:7a.

Notes. A disciple is cleansed, governed and transformed by the words in the Bible. The words Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples “cleansed” them, that is, justified and sanctified them through their faith in the words of the gospel (John 15:3). And if the words of Jesus Christ remain in them, then these words will change his thoughts, motives, attitudes, faith, convictions, speaking and behaviour. The words of Jesus Christ do not remain merely as “knowledge”, but influence every aspect of the disciple. Thus the disciple is continuously and permanently changed for the better (John 15:7).

9. A true disciple of Jesus prays according to the Word of Jesus Christ.

Read John 15:7b,16b; (cf. 1 John 5:14).

Notes. A disciple prays according to the words in the Bible and experiences that God answers his prayers. The answering of his prayers is however dependent on the disciple remaining in Christ and Christ’s words remaining in the disciple.

10. A true disciple of Jesus produces much and lasting fruit.

Read John 15:8,16a.

Notes. A disciple produces fruit. The main lesson of this *allegory* in John 15 is that a disciple will produce “fruit” only when he remains connected to Jesus Christ, that is, when “Christ is in him” and “he is in Christ” (Colossians 1:27-28). By producing “much” (John 15:8) and “lasting” (John 15:16) fruit a Christian indicates that he has become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

What is meant by “fruit” in the Bible?

- The fruit produced⁷ by repentance (a change of mind) is “good works” as for example: sharing your possessions, not collecting money more than required, not extorting money, not accusing people falsely and by being content (Luke 3:8-14).
- The fruit produced (born)⁸ by the proclamation of the gospel is “new converts (believers)” (Colossians 1:5-6).
- The fruit produced by the making of disciples is “mature, functioning and persevering Christians (Christians who do not back-slide” into their old lives) (John 15:16).
- The fruit brought about by the indwelling Holy Spirit is “Christian character” (Galatians 5:22-23).

By remaining in Christ, disciples produce much fruit (John 15:5). By being pruned by God the Father disciples produce even more fruit (John 15:2)! “Pruning” means cutting away the dead and fruitless parts of a branch (for example, specific sins and bad habits). Pruning consists of God’s rebuke, correction and discipline through the hardships and trials, which God allows. By continuous care and training, new believers become mature, functioning and persevering Christians.

In the allegory a complete branch (representing an unbeliever) is cut off. Such a branch cannot represent a born-again believer (see John 5:24; John 10:28; John 17:12; Philippians 1:6)! “The dry and barren branches” in verse 6 do not represent Christians who were once born-again, but later fell away from the Christian faith. They only represent “name-

⁷ Greek: poieó (imperative), to produce

⁸ Greek: pheró, to bear

Christians” (or cultural Christians) who never had a personal connection to Jesus Christ and therefore never had life (see Hebrews 6:4-8; Matthew 13:30,37-42). That is why they are cast away and burned (cf. Matthew 3:10-12).

In the parable of the sower Jesus teaches that some of his disciples would bear 100 fold fruit and others would bear 60 fold and 30 fold (Matthew 13:8). The amount of fruit you bear is different for every disciple. There are three reasons for this difference:

- The amount of fruit depends on the measure of remorse over sin, the measure of faith, the measure of courage, persistence and zeal for God’s kingdom (in proclaiming the gospel and making disciples).
- The amount of fruit depends on God’s grace, the natural and spiritual gifts and the special task which God has assigned.
- The amount of fruit depends on the circumstances in which God has placed a person. For example, some countries in the world are hard and dry and need more time and work.

11. A true disciple of Jesus is first trained in character and equipped for a task.

Read Luke 6:39-42.

Notes. A disciple must first be equipped and trained by Jesus Christ before God can use him to equip and train others. “Equipping” consists of:

- *teaching* the Bible truths
- *training* in Biblical skills
- and *transmitting* a Biblical example.

A disciple must first learn before he can teach others. He must first deal with his own weaknesses and failures, before he can rebuke and correct others. The goal of a disciple is to become Christ like in his character or personality and behaviour.

12. A true disciple of Jesus shows self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Read Luke 9:23-26.

Notes. A disciple denies (says “no” to) his own selfish desires and bears his cross, that is, is willing to be rejected and suffer for Christ’s sake. Because he has been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20), he puts to death the misdeeds of the body of sin (Romans 8:13). He is willing to identify himself with Jesus Christ and his mission and is not ashamed to be a Christian. He tolerates the negative remarks and reactions of people. Because he is a Christian, he is willing to bear the ridicule, rejection, persecution and shame for the sake of Jesus Christ.

13. A true disciple of Jesus is called to a commitment to struggle, rejection and suffering.

Read Luke 9:57-58.

Notes. In the following three parables, different people desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A disciple is called to count the cost of discipleship. The first aspirant disciple wanted to follow Jesus Christ without a call from Jesus Christ. He wanted to follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. He saw the crowds following Jesus, the miracles and the enthusiasm of people and wanted to be closely associated with Jesus who was the centre of all this action. But he neglected to count the cost of discipleship. As the gospel story develops, Judea rejected Jesus (John 5:18), Galilee cast him out (John 6:66), Gadara begged him to leave their district (Matthew 8:34), Samaria refused to give him lodging (Luke 9:53), earth would not have him (Matthew 27:23) and finally even heaven forsook him (Matthew 27:46). *Discipleship implies struggle, rejection and suffering.* That is the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-30).

14. A true disciple of Jesus is called to unconditional obedience to Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 9:59-60.

Notes. A disciple obeys immediately and unconditionally. The second aspirant disciple was called, but not ready to follow Jesus Christ. He wanted to follow Jesus Christ on his own terms: not immediately, but later. He had the wrong priorities and therefore made a condition. He wanted to bury his father first. It is possible that his father had just died, but also that his father would still live for a very long time. The words of Jesus: “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom (kingship) of God” must not be misunderstood. Jesus wanted to make it very clear to this would-be disciple that Jesus as King demands immediate and unconditional obedience. Jesus does not teach that you should abandon your parents, because Christians must honour their parents and care for their needs (John 19:26-27; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:4,8). He teaches that a disciple must love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ *more* than his parents or anyone else (Matteüs 10:37-39; Acts 5:29)!

15. A true disciple of Jesus is called to follow without looking back.

Read Luke 9:61-62.

Notes. A disciple follows without looking back. The third aspirant disciple also wanted to follow Jesus Christ without being called. He too made a condition. He first wanted to say good-bye to his family and friends. He probably did not know himself well enough. Jesus was able to see in his heart and see into his future. He knew that there was something

that the man could not see himself (cf. John 2:25). Jesus was able to search his heart and read his mind. Jesus knew his insecurities, deliberations and motives and knew that his family and friends could easily persuade him to stay home and not follow Jesus. A disciple must be willing to leave his family and everything else for the sake of Jesus Christ (Mark 10:29-30). A true disciple *never looks back* and never longs for his old life.

16. A true disciple of Jesus loves Jesus Christ more than any other relationship.

Read Luke 14:26.

Notes. A disciple prefers Jesus Christ above all other relationships. The literal translation says that a disciple must “hate” other relationships in order to follow Jesus Christ. But the word “hate” in Greek does not have the same negative meaning as in English. It means “to prefer (all other relationships) less (than Jesus Christ)” (Matthew 10:37). A genuine disciple regards Jesus Christ as more important than any other relationship that threatens to take the place of Jesus Christ (for example: the relationship with a parent, a family member or a girlfriend or boyfriend)! A true disciple makes every other relationship subordinate to his loyalty and devotion for Jesus Christ.

17. A true disciple of Jesus accepts the sacrifice, rejection and suffering of being a committed Christian.

Read Luke 14:27.

Notes. A disciple bears his own cross. Jesus carried his own cross. For Jesus Christ the cross means the following: rejection by people, oppression, persecution, suffering, shame and finally death. A disciple of Jesus carries his own (but different kind of) cross”. This means that the disciple would often find himself in trouble, when people reject, oppress, persecute, humiliate and possibly kill him for the sake of Jesus Christ.

18. A true disciple of Jesus prefers Jesus Christ above all possessions and ambitions.

Read Luke 14:33.

Notes. A disciple prefers Jesus Christ above all activities, possessions or duties. A disciple is willing to give up anything and everything in order to follow Christ and learn from him. He does not allow the love of money, career, success, fame and power to disqualify him from being a disciple of Christ. If the choice is between a particular activity, possession or ambition and following Jesus, then the disciple chooses to follow Jesus. He will not choose money, success, power or fame. The disciple’s supreme commitment is to Jesus Christ and no other commitment person, activity, possession, or duty may stand in its way.

19. A true disciple of Jesus is a witness of Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 24:45-48.

Notes. A disciple is a witness of Jesus Christ. The disciples in the time of Jesus were not wise philosophers, clever scientists or the bearers of a religious tradition. They were plain people to whom God had committed his revelation (Matthew 11:25-27; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28). They were “the little flock” to whom God had entrusted his kingdom (Luke 12:32; Matthew 5:10). The learned Jews regarded them as “unschooled, ordinary men”, but many people recognized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). The disciples spoke confidently and courageously about Jesus Christ and what they had learned from him (2 Corinthians 4:7) (**Read** 2 Corinthians 11:23-29). “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called, Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Disciples of Jesus Christ still do this.

20. A true disciple of Jesus is willing to suffer the humiliation of Jesus Christ.

Read Matthew 10:24-25.

Notes. A disciple is willing to suffer humiliation. The opponents of Jesus called him “a Samaritan” (illegitimate)(John 8:48), “a sinner” (one who misses God’s goal)(John 9:24), “demon-possessed and insane” (John 10:20) and “a tool of Beelzebub, Satan (Matthew 12:24-27). People will treat the disciples of Jesus as they treated Jesus (Matthew 10:24). The disciples too will be misunderstood, falsely accused, their words will be twisted and they will be persecuted, just as is already happening in some countries (Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:12).

21. A true disciple of Jesus applies the truths about the kingdom of God to life.

Read Matthew 13:52.

Notes. A disciple applies the truths of the kingdom of God to life. A person (also a teacher of the law) who has become a disciple of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God (who has been instructed about the kingdom)⁹, has hidden the words or truths about the kingdom of God in his “storeroom” (heart, Psalm 119:11) and continues to bring out old and new truths and applications from the Old and New Testament¹⁰. He makes applications of these truths and teaches them to others. He knows that the kingdom (kingship) does not refer to Israel, but to the kingdom of God as taught by Jesus in the

⁹ Greek: mathéutheis té basileia

¹⁰ The important truths in the Bible are summarised in the Delta course (www.deltacourse.org).

Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5-7) and in all his parables. For example, he taught that the kingdom of God grows (Matthew 13) and how Christians relate to one another in the kingdom (Matthew chapter 18-19).

“Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). “Streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38). The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are the true “teachers of the law” of the present age (Matthew 23:34). They are the true expositors of the Bible and the kingdom of God. These kingdom truths are not only ancient, well proved, but also have new and fresh applications to all aspects of life and for people living in different circumstances. Through their teaching and personal example the disciples proclaim the reality of the sovereign reign of Jesus Christ (the King of the kingdom) in this world.

22. A true disciple of Jesus is involved in making disciples.

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

Notes. A disciple of Jesus Christ takes the initiative to make disciples. Christians are called to acknowledge (confess) Jesus Christ in the presence of people (Matthew 10:32-33). They are responsible to give an account to people about their faith, love and hope when people ask questions about Jesus (1 Peter 3:15-16).

A disciple of Jesus does not wait until someone comes to him, but takes the initiative and goes to his family, friends and colleagues. He goes to his neighbourhood, city and even other countries to tell people about Jesus Christ. He tries to bring different groups of people in touch with the love of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel, so that they too will get to know Jesus Christ personally and follow him as his disciple. People can only become a disciple of Jesus when they hear the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ and obey him (Romans 10:14-17). It was the life task of the apostle Paul to bring other people to faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ (Romans 1:5). It is also the task of the disciples of Jesus Christ to proclaim the good news to all the creation (Mark 16:15) and to make “disciples of Jesus Christ” (not: “followers of a particular denomination”) of all nations! Obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ must lead to involvement in “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). A disciple of Jesus Christ should also get involved in social justice for the stranger, the poor, the oppressed and the destitute (Matthew 25:34-36; James 1:27).

23. A true disciple of Jesus gives evidence of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 5:32; Acts 15:8.

Notes. A disciple gives evidence of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. “Being filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18) begins with being born-again by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:4-7) and is continued by daily submission to the governing and guidance of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18). The Holy Spirit lives forever in the disciples of Jesus Christ (John 14:16-18). His task is to magnify and glorify Jesus Christ in the congregation (John 16:14), to transform the character of Christians (Galatians 5:22-23) and help them to carry out the task they received from God (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). “Disciples” without the Holy Spirit are NOT disciples of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:1-2)!

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 “Characteristics of a disciple” together with another person or group of people.
2. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Romans 13 - 16** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. (6) **2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1**. Theme: “Forbidden relationships.”
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.