

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 25

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 LIMITLESS
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Definition.

What is “worship”? Worship is:

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

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

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

Meditation.

Worship is to admire and praise God.

Theme: The God of the Bible is limitless

Read. Take turns to read the Bible passages here below and its explanation or explain each passage shortly in your own words.

1. God exists above the limitations of time. Yet God reveals himself within time.

Read Psalm 90:4. The “time” that was needed to create the whole universe is of a divine nature and cannot be expressed in terms of the human time frame, because “time” as we humans know it is something God created on the fourth creation day. Then only could man calculate the 24-hour day and the year of about 365 days (Genesis 1:14). God created the universe with all its bodies and the earth “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1-2), that is, before he *completed* his creation in “six divine creation days” (Genesis 2:1) and before he created “the 24-hour day” (Genesis 1:14). The duration of “the divine creation day” (Genesis 1:5) cannot be expressed in terms of the human time frame.

However, the length of the ordinary created “day” is limited to 24 hours and the length of the ordinary year is about 365 days. God is not bound to the limitations of his creation and thus not bound to “time”, which he himself created. He is not bound to the time-frame of past, present and future. He is not bound to the limitations of human history. God can as it were accelerate time or retard time. He can as it were go back into time in the past or run ahead of time into the future.

In human history, God stands above the human time frame. He knows and controls the events in human history with complete sovereign power. But although God stands above the limitations of the created human time frame, he revealed himself in human history with its created human time frame! Through taking on the human nature besides his divine nature, God entered his creation and human history with its human time frame. This was the only way in which God could reveal himself perfectly to created man (Galatians 4:4; 1 John 1:1).

2. God’s thoughts are unfathomable. Yet people can understand what God says.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9; Deuteronomy 29:29. God has many thoughts and plans, which he has not revealed to man. God’s thoughts with regard to how he created the universe, his thoughts about the origin of evil, his thoughts why he allowed man to fall into sin, and many of his thoughts about salvation and judgement of people has NOT been revealed to man. God’s thoughts about certain aspects of himself: his divine nature and his plan of salvation within human history have also not been revealed to man. God’s plans for our personal lives and his ways of doing things in life he does not reveal to man.

All such thoughts belong to “God’s hidden things or mysteries” (NIV God’s secret things), that is, they belong to God’s eternal decree and can never be fathomed or reasoned out by man. The hidden things or mysteries belong only to God. For example, God never revealed why he chose specific people to be our parents, when he caused us to be born and live, where he caused us to live on earth, why he gave us particular physical, emotional and intellectual features, etc. Nevertheless, all these things that were not revealed fit perfectly into his eternal, sovereign and perfect plan for our lives!

But there are also many things, which God has revealed to man! God has revealed many aspects with regard to his nature, his character, the fallen nature of man and his plan of salvation in human history. All such aspects belong to “the revealed things”. The revealed things belong to us and to our children. We can know them and should know them!

3. God's power is without limitations.

Read Jeremiah 32:17,27. God has made the whole universe by his sovereign great power! Nothing is too hard for God! Human problems, human inability, disabilities (physical, mental, emotional, social etc.) and human setbacks or misfortunes never thwart God's plans! They never limit or cross God's purposes! They may be a problem for us, but are never a problem for God! "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37)!

God is Almighty in the universe. He does what he pleases and he will carry out his thoughts and plan for 100%. "The LORD Almighty has sworn, 'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?'" (Isaiah 14:24,27)! Therefore we may believe that whatever happens to his children has his divine permission!

4. God's knowledge is without limitations.

Read Psalm 139:1-4. God sees everything and knows everything! He sees the visible and the invisible things. He sees the outward and inward things. He sees the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realities. "Nothing in creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). God knows everything we dream, think, feel, say and do. God knows all our motives and attitudes. Therefore we may live transparent and fearless lives.

5. God's presence is without limitations.

Read Psalm 139:7-12. God is Spirit. He is not limited to a physical body or to one place on earth. He is everywhere in the universe and beyond the universe. No one can hide from God. No one can flee to a place where God is not present.

Conclusion. Although no human being can fathom the nature and personality of God, his perfect attributes and presence, his plan and motives, we can know God, his thoughts, words and deeds in the measure that he has revealed them to us in the Bible and in Jesus Christ.

Worship.

Worship God in his characteristic of being limitless. Worship in small groups of three people each.

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] GENESIS 1:1 – 4:26
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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 1:1 – 4:26). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	[QUIET TIME] THE QUESTIONS METHOD
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Introduction. When you take time to fellowship with Jesus Christ, you will experience the wonderful blessings that God has planned for you to have. A daily quiet time is the most important spiritual discipline a Christian can develop.

- In manual 1 we have learned "the Chosen Bible Verse or Favourite Truth method of quiet time".
- In manual 3 we will learn a second method of quiet time: "the Question method of quiet time".

Choose a method that suits you best.

A. MOTIVATION FOR HAVING A DAILY TIME OF FELLOWSHIP (A QUIET TIME) WITH GOD (JESUS CHRIST)

You have fellowship with Jesus Christ through a regular (daily) quiet time.

1. The beginning of fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Read John 6:27-29; John 8:24. Fellowship with Jesus Christ begins by believing in him. Without faith in Jesus Christ nobody will be saved! Without faith nobody can fellowship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, daily fellowship with Jesus Christ can only begin after you have received Jesus Christ into your heart and life as Saviour and Lord.

2. Reasons for fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Discover and discuss. Why is fellowship with Jesus Christ indispensable for a Christian?

(1) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience God's grace and truth.

Read John 1:16-17. Jesus Christ brought grace and truth. Fellowship with Jesus Christ brings that grace and truth to us. It is not true that Christians must try to keep hundreds of laws and rules (do's and do not's) to please God. Such a kind of Christianity is burdensome (cf. Matthew 11:28) and impossible. By the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ *grace* became available. Grace forgives sins and enables us to obey God. Also the truth about God, man, sin, salvation and

how to live became available. “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another” (John 1:16). Therefore, daily fellowship with Jesus Christ allows us to receive one blessing of grace after another, just like the waves of the sea roll onto the beach. You would not want to miss this grace of God!

(2) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to get to know ourselves.

Read John 2:25. We may think that we know ourselves, but that is not true. Only Jesus Christ knows us through and through. Fellowship with Jesus Christ helps us to know ourselves as we really are. Because Jesus Christ knows everything about us, our weaknesses and our possibilities, he helps us to develop our personality and character as we fellowship with him.

(3) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience acceptance.

Read John 6:37. Fellowship with Jesus Christ brings acceptance. Every human being has three emotional needs, namely, acceptance, security and significance. The first emotional need of every human being is acceptance. Fellowship with Jesus Christ causes us to feel accepted as we are together with our weaknesses and peculiarities. We will know that we are wanted, loved and needed!

(4) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to receive God's guidance.

Read John 8:12. When we walk in the light of Jesus Christ, we learn to see God as he is, to see the way God wants us to walk and to discern the choices and decisions he would want us to make. We will know who he wants us to be and what he wants us to do.

(5) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience true freedom.

Read John 8:31-32. Fellowship with Jesus Christ sets our whole being free. It will set us free from ignorance and false teachings. It will set us free from evil thoughts, motives, attitudes, habits and relationships. Fellowship with Jesus Christ sets us free from whatever binds (or enslaves) us!

(6) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience security.

Read John 10:27-28. Fellowship with Jesus Christ brings security. The second emotional need of every human being is security. No circumstance and no person can ever snatch us out of his hand. Everything that happens to us has his sovereign permission (Romans 8:28). “Nothing and no-one can separate us from God's love for us” (Romans 8:37-39)!

(7) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience God's love and nearness.

Read John 14:21,23. Fellowship with Jesus Christ causes us to experience God's love and nearness. We will experience his patience, kindness and trust. He will encourage us, spur us on and cause us to experience his presence in our various circumstances.

(8) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience significance.

Read John 15:5. Fellowship with Jesus Christ causes us to bear much fruit. The third emotional need of every human being is significance. If we have no fellowship with Jesus Christ, we can have no real and lasting influence and make no contribution to life. “Without me, you can do nothing (that has lasting significance)!” (John 15:5). Fellowship with Jesus Christ brings continual significance to our life and the lives of others. We experience that Jesus Christ uses us to have influence on people and events. Then we bear fruit for eternity.

(9) Fellowship with Christ is indispensable in order to experience true friendship.

Read John 15:14-15. Fellowship with Jesus Christ causes us to have significant friendship with him and with other people. In this friendship, Christ takes the initiative and he makes all kinds of sacrifices for us. He always draws us upward to a life of obedience. And he shares his deepest thoughts with us.

Summarise. Daily fellowship with Jesus Christ, especially through quiet time, causes us to experience God's wonderful blessings he has planned for us (Ephesians 1:3).

B. METHOD (The questions method for quiet time)

Setting aside a special time to fellowship with God (Christ) especially through Bible and prayer, is sometimes called a “quiet time”. “The questions” method for quiet time also has five steps:

Step 1. Pray to God.

Begin your quiet time by consciously entering into the presence of God. Ask God to speak to you personally through the Bible and the Holy Spirit who lives in you. Ask him to renew your life and to strengthen you through the meditation of his Word.

Pray a short prayer, which helps you to direct your thoughts to God. For example, you could pray, “Lord, reveal to me who you are. Teach me to do your will. Show me the way I should go” (Psalm 143:8,10). Or, “Lord, let me hear your voice today” (Hebrews 3:15). Or “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18).

Step 2. Read your Bible.

Read a passage or a half or whole chapter of your Bible every day. You may like to use a Bible reading plan (see Manual 1, supplement 2). In the Dota course you will find the preparation for the following lesson at the end of every

lesson; including about 3½ chapters from the Bible from which you are asked to have a quiet time before the next meeting. The purpose is that every member of the discipleship group (Dota group) have a quiet time from the same Bible passages. You may also like to make use of a Bible marking system (See manual 1, supplement 3).

A small group of Christians can meet together every day and have a quiet time as a group. This will help everyone to have *daily* fellowship with Jesus. In some countries Christians in small groups meet together very early every morning to have a quiet time together, to read the Bible together and to pray together!

Step 3. Choose questions.

Choose one or several questions from topics about which you want to learn more.

Make use of one or several of the following questions:

Question 1. Get to know God.

What do I learn about God (Christ or the Holy Spirit) in the Bible? What is he like? What does he say? What does he do? What is he saying to me now? What is he doing in my life now? For example Paul's two questions in Acts 22:8,10, "Who are you, Lord?" "What shall I do, Lord?"

Question 2. Get to know people.

What do I learn about people in the Bible? What are people like? What do they say? What do they do? What are their motives, attitudes, desires, habits, skills, accomplishments and mistakes?

Question 3. Get to know myself.

What do I learn about myself in the Bible? Where do I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? What do I think and believe? What do I do or neglect to do? What could I become? How can I have influence?

Question 4. Change.

What does God intend me to know or believe? What does God intend me to be or do? What response does God or God's Word require of me?

You could devise your own questions. For example:

Question 5. Evaluation.

Where do I stand in relationship to Jesus Christ? And where would I like to stand in relationship to him?

Question 6. Understanding.

What don't I understand that I would like to ask my group about?

Question 7. Feelings and emotions.

What do I feel about what I read in the Bible? Does it make me afraid or give me hope? Does it make me feel uneasy or encourage me?

Question 8. Ministry.

How does Jesus relate to people? How does Jesus serve people? How does Jesus teach, train and equip people? How does Jesus answer people's questions? How does Jesus react to oppression, difficulties and challenges?

Question 9. Relationships.

How should I relate to other Christians, other congregations and other denominations? How should I respond to false prophets and false teachers? How should I relate to evil people? How should I relate to the poor, the oppressed and the handicapped?

Question 10. Character.

Which virtue or Christian character should I develop?

Step 4. Meditate on your discoveries.

Meditate on your discoveries, because you want to understand the truth, receive renewed strength from it and put it into practice.

Christian meditation is different than meditation in other religions. Christian meditation has the following four parts: to think, to pray, to apply and to write.

(1) Think.

You meditate, because you want to understand what God says. So you think about the meaning of the important words.

(2) Pray.

You want to know what God is saying to you. So you pray softly in your heart and ask God what he intends to say to you. Ask him to explain the truth to you and to show you how the truth should function in your life. Prayerfully discuss the truths with God. Expect to hear God's voice in your spirit.

(3) Relate.

You want to practise the truth. So you relate the truth to your personal life and to the world in which you live.

Ask yourself questions like, “What is my need in the light of this truth?” “Which truth renews and strengthens me?” “What does God want me to know, believe, be or do?” In short, “What response does God require from me?”

(4) Write.

You want to remember and communicate the truth. So you write the most important thoughts of your meditation down in a notebook.

Step 5. Pray about your answers.

Pray about the most important thoughts of your meditation. Remember, ‘prayer’ is a response to what God said to you.

C. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR QUIET TIME

1. A daily habit.

- Have a daily quiet time – alone or with another person or group.
- Have a quiet time in the morning, afternoon or evening, whatever time is best for you.
- Make use of “the favourite truth method” or “the questions method”.
- Also make use of the Bible reading plan and the Bible marking system.

2. Record your notes in a quiet time notebook.

Record your notes as follows:

- the date
- the Bible reference of the passage you read for your quiet time
- the question or questions you considered
- all the important discoveries and thoughts of your meditation you would like to remember, act upon or share.

The formulation and recording of your thoughts will help you to clarify, remember and communicate God’s truths. Reading through your notes will help you discover how God is leading you.

3. Share one of your quiet times with your group.

Share during the discipleship group meeting one of your quiet times during the past week or 14 days. Choose what you will share before you come to the meeting. Of course, you may read aloud what you have recorded.

4. Quiet time as a group together.

Have a quiet time as a group together. Make use of the question method. Decide together which question you would use. Share your discoveries with one another. Pray with one another.

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.

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. Practise in your group: choose a passage from the Bible, for example Psalm 34 and devise your own question. Preach, teach or study the teaching of “the questions method for a quiet time” together with another person or group of people.
2. Personal time with God. In the Old Testament we select only important chapters for quiet time. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Genesis 6:1 – 9:28** each day. Make use of the questions method of quiet time. Make notes.
3. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. **Genesis 1:24 – 2:25.** Theme: The cultural 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.