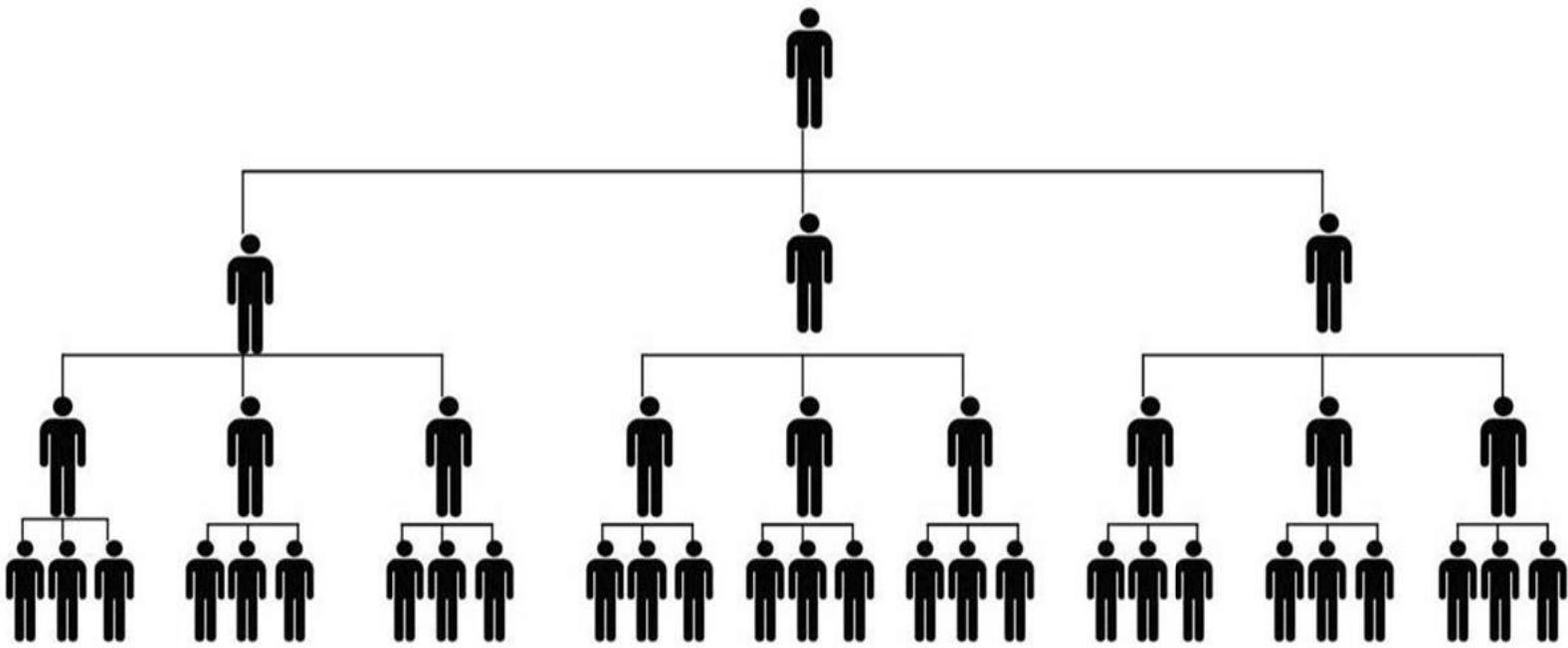


# Go Make Disciples

## Lesson 1: Disciple- Making Disciples



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Study Number: 185

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## Go Make Disciples

### Lesson 1:

# Disciple- Making Disciples

When Jesus was about to leave this earth and return to Heaven, He instructed His disciples to do the work of making disciples. Matthew 28:18-20 reads, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

The work of Jesus’ disciples making disciples of others was on the forefront of Jesus’ mind at this time. He was no longer going to be on this earth to continue the work Himself. It was now being entrusted to a handful of disciples to complete the greatest mission that had even been given to mankind. They were to carry the saving message of the gospel throughout the entire world so that others would become disciples of Jesus Christ and be saved from their sins.

So, these early disciples went about accomplishing this work. The result was two-fold. First, the saving message of the gospel was preached throughout the known world. About thirty years after Jesus’ commission, the apostle Paul wrote concerning the gospel and said that it “was preached to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). Second, disciples of Jesus Christ multiplied. For instance, Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

This work of making disciples has been passed on to those who are Jesus’ disciples today. There is still a great need for every person on this earth to hear the saving message of the gospel and become disciples of

Christ. So, those who claim to be Jesus’ disciples today must honestly consider if they are devoted to this work.

In this series of lessons, the goal is to help those who truly desire to be disciples of Christ learn about making disciples for Christ. This first study aims to introduce the concept of disciple-making disciples. In order to please Christ in your discipleship, you must recognize that the work of making disciples is involved. So, we will consider that disciples should work to make disciples. Then, we will consider that disciple-makers should be disciples. And, we will consider the need for spiritual mentors.

## Disciples Should Work To Make Disciples

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Disciples of Jesus Christ should be disciple-makers. To help us recognize this, understand that there are two things involved in being a disciple. First, a disciple is a pupil (student) who is committed to learning from a master. Second, a disciple imitates the master. So, those who are disciples of Christ must be diligent to learn from and imitate the Master (Jesus Christ). This will certainly have a tremendous impact on disciples working to make disciples for Jesus.

### ***Jesus worked to make disciples***

Let’s begin by learning from Jesus’ example. When He lived on this earth, He had a great mission to fulfill. Namely, He was committed to accomplishing His Father’s mission of providing Himself as the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world. Then, as He went through His earthly ministry, this work obviously included teaching and calling people to become His disciples so that they would be saved. Luke 19:10 says, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus worked to make disciples of any who would listen to Him. Sometimes He taught great multitudes who had gathered. Sometimes He taught one-on-one. Sometimes He taught a small group of people. Regardless of the circumstance, His interest was in helping others learn how to follow Him both by giving instruction and by providing the perfect example to follow.

Matthew 4:18-22 describes Jesus calling four fishermen to be His disciples. “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called

Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him."

Peter, Andrew, James, and John all responded to Jesus' invitation to be His disciples by following Him. From this time, Jesus continued working with these four men to train them for the work of making disciples of others. Notice that Jesus was going use the abilities of these men to be "fishers of men." They were not highly skilled or educated individuals. But, Jesus was going to work with them closely so that they would be able to carry on His work without Him.

For instance, after Jesus ascended into Heaven and had commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples, Peter and John had the opportunity to preach in Acts chapters 3 and 4 (after healing a paralyzed man). When they were brought before the highest Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) the people on the court "saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

They could see that these men had no exceptional background that would qualify them to have such a great impact on people. But, they realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus. This was all they needed. As Jesus worked to teach those who wanted to follow Him by example and instruction, He prepared them to carry on this work without Him! You can read through the gospel records (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) to see how Jesus worked diligently to make disciples out of these and others – especially noting the frequent mentions of Peter, James, and John.

### ***Jesus' disciples are taught to make disciples***

It only stands to reason that a work that was so important to Jesus would be carried on after He ascended into Heaven. So, there are many references in the Scriptures that indicate the necessity of Jesus' disciples working to make disciples for Jesus. You simply cannot separate being a disciple from the work of making disciples!

The earliest disciples of Jesus recognized that they were expected to be about the work of making disciples. Consider the "Great Commission" Jesus gave directly to His disciples (particularly to His apostles).

Matthew 28:18-20 says, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."

Mark 16:15-16 says, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

Luke 24:46-49 says, "Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.'"

Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Clearly, they were to take the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ into all the world (beginning at Jerusalem). It was not enough just for Jesus to have a handful of disciples. For, if the gospel was not spread throughout the world and disciples did not multiply, then how would people learn of their opportunity to be saved from their sins through Jesus Christ. Christianity would just die out.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven and the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (in Acts 1 and 2), these first disciples began their work of making disciples. The apostles preached the gospel in Acts 2 and about 3,000 people were added to the number of disciples (verse 41). The number came to be about 5,000 in Acts 4:4. In Acts 5, "believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (verse 14). The "number of the disciples was multiplying" in Acts 6:1. And, as the word of God spread, the "number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (Acts 6:7). Then, whenever persecution forced the disciples to

leave Jerusalem, “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” so that the word was taken into other parts of the earth (Acts 8:4). Acts 9:31 says, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” The word continued spreading and the number of disciples multiplied.

Jesus’ plan of His disciples working to make disciples, who would work to make disciples was working (as God’s plans always do)! The number of disciples was multiplying throughout the earth. But, it is important for disciples today to stop and recognize that this work was not reserved just for the apostles or highly-skilled workers in Christ’s kingdom. As we saw in Acts 8:4, all the disciples who were scattered were about the work of preaching the word wherever they went.

Consider a couple of passages that describe the work of making disciples. First, consider Romans 10:13-15. “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Today, there continues to be those who need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved (just as all those who are now disciples once needed to do). And, just like those who are disciples needed to have someone preach the gospel to them so that they could hear, believe, and obey its message, there are many people disciples of Christ come into contact with who need the same thing. Now, those who are disciples must recognize that it is *their* work to help other people be disciples of Jesus Christ!

Second, consider 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul told Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Later in the chapter, Paul wrote, “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (verses 24-26).

Jesus has ascended into Heaven and committed the work of making disciples to His disciples. The early disciples who accomplished this work so well have died. Now, the work of making disciples belongs to those who are disciples today. Jesus still expects that those who have had the saving message of the gospel entrusted to them commit it to others who will also be able to teach others. Notice that a servant of the Lord “must” be “able to teach” and help correct those who are in opposition to God learn the truth so as to escape Satan’s traps!

Therefore, if you are a disciple of Christ, you are charged with the work of making disciples. Just like those who are real fishermen fish, real disciples work to make disciples of others! Just ask yourself: “Am I really a true disciple of Jesus Christ, if I do not listen to Jesus’ teaching to make disciples or follow Jesus’ example of making disciples?” Surely, if those who claim to be disciples of Jesus are not committed to the work of making disciples they need to listen to Jesus’ question in Luke 6:46: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?”

### ***The goal is to make disciples***

Now, as you think about the work that you have been given to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ so as to make disciples for Jesus, you must recognize that the goal is to make disciples. This needs to be emphasized and really understood because, I think, there are many Christians who get the focus all wrong.

Some people are only focused on giving other people information. Some people are only focused on winning religious arguments. Some people are only focused on baptizing others. Some people are only focused on getting more people into a church building. Some people are only focused on building a following for themselves.

But, the goal of the “Great Commission” is to go and “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). Now, it is certainly true that passing on information (specifically, the gospel of Jesus Christ) is essential to this task. This work necessarily includes baptizing people. And, this work will result in more people being part of local churches.

Yet, let me explain how the goals that I previously mentioned fall short of Christ’s true goal. Some of them are obvious. For instance, we must never be interested in building a following for ourselves or in numbers for the sake of numbers. But, what about the others?

## Disciple-Makers Should Be Disciples

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The end goal is not just to give people information because it is possible to pass along information (even the saving message of the gospel) in a way that does not help people be disciples. It may be that the message is taught with such a lack of love and concern for the one being taught that the individual is driven away from Christ. Although it is true that you can only plant and water God's word in the hearts of others and you cannot control the result (see 1 Corinthians 3:6), you must teach it in the right kind of way.

The end goal also is not winning arguments. Similar to the last point, you may conduct yourself in such a way that you win the intellectual argument and lose the soul. Your interest must not be to prove that you know the truth, but to help others believe and obey it!

And, the end goal is not even baptizing people. While being baptized is a necessary part of becoming a disciple, there are those who teach and baptize people – and then leave them without helping them develop into growing disciples. For, those who accept the gospel initially and become disciples by being baptized must continue to learn from Jesus and become more like Him.

The true goal is to make disciples. And, to be a true disciple, Jesus said that He must come first. Luke 14:26 says, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:27 says, "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:33 says, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

So, as you work to do what Jesus desires, you must focus on helping other people be true disciples of Christ. Everything you tell them must be focused on this goal. Your example must be focused on this goal. How you interact with them must be focused on this goal. For, unless someone becomes a true disciple of Christ by committing himself/herself fully to following the Lord in all things, he/she will not be saved (as Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21-23)!

As you think about the work of making disciples, you should clearly understand that disciples-makers should be disciples themselves. Although this point should go without saying, it needs to be emphasized because of the great danger that is posed by those who are not truly disciples. So, before you go about the work of making disciples, you should evaluate yourself.

### ***True disciples are salt and light***

Here is how Jesus refers to those who are His disciples: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

As we have seen, true disciples are entirely committed to learning from and imitating Jesus Christ in their own lives. This kind of life will truly stand out from the world. They will be like salt that seasons a world full of bitterness and light in a world full of darkness!

But, true disciples don't just stand out from the world. Instead, as we have seen, true disciples multiply! So, the salt tries to season the sinful world so that they will become acceptable to Christ. The light tries to shine on those in darkness so that they can come out of sin.

Jesus says that those who are disciples of His will be spreading their influence so that others may also come to glorify the Father in Heaven. Only true disciples will be able to accomplish this. Those who truly follow the Lord themselves will be able to teach other people what they need to know to follow Christ and show them what living for Christ looks like.

So, those who are lost in sin can recognize their need to come to the Lord for salvation in part through the godly example of disciples. Maybe they will want to know more about following Christ. Maybe they will begin imitating Christ by imitating the example of one

of Christ's disciples. Or, maybe it will just give you the right opportunity to talk with others about following Christ.

Think about it this way. If you wanted help losing weight, would you want to go to a "dietician" who was overweight? If you wanted financial help, would you go to someone who is broke? If you wanted marital help, would you go to someone who has a terrible marriage? If not, why not?

In the same way, people who are interested in following Jesus Christ will not want to be taught to be disciples by someone who is not truly a disciple. So, in order for you to have the greatest opportunity to influence others to be disciples of Christ, you also must be a disciple. Therefore, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

### ***The dangers of fake disciples***

Just think of the dangers that are posed by those who are not true disciples as they work to make disciples. First, you may be thinking, "Why would someone who is not a true disciple try to make disciples?" There may be many answers. Some have selfish motives in seeking financial gain, a following for themselves, wanting to make themselves look good, etc. Some have deceived themselves into thinking that they are true disciples while they are actually living in sin (like Jesus described in Matthew 7:21-23). Some have been deceived by others into thinking that they are disciples of Jesus while they do not actually obey what Jesus instructs.

Regardless, consider what Jesus asked in Matthew 5:13 again. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." So, if those who are supposed to be Jesus' disciples do not actually follow Jesus, their influence does not actually accomplish the good in the world that Jesus intended.

For example, some who claim to be disciples of Jesus are hypocrites. They act the part of being a disciple on occasion, but do not always follow Him with love and sincerity. For instance, although they did not claim to be disciples of Christ, the Jewish leaders claimed to follow God and led people into error through their hypocrisy. Concerning them, Jesus said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that

observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:2-4).

We simply will not be successful in making disciples of Christ by only playing "Christian." If people see that you are not doing the things that you are telling them they should be doing, you will be like the salt that becomes worthless! Even more, not only will you hinder people from following Christ, but you may do great damage to the cause of Christ and those who are interested in following Him.

For example, one of the top reasons people give for not joining a church is because of the hypocrisy of the members. Why should people want to listen to you and allow you the opportunity to influence them if they see you living in sinful ways? And, why should they have any interest in listening to God if you are living for sin?

Then, those who are not true disciples of Christ can also harm people and the cause of Christ by making others who are just like them (rather than like Christ). For instance, hypocrites may make other hypocrites. Lukewarm followers of Christ who are not entirely devoted to Him may make other lukewarm followers of Christ. Those who have believed a false gospel may spread their false gospel even further.

I believe that Jesus recognized this whenever He addressed some lukewarm followers and said, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

I truly believe that it would be better for people to be all the way against Jesus than for people to be lukewarm. I believe that lukewarm and pretend disciples of Christ do more damage to the cause of Christ than those who are openly and aggressively working against Christ. A big part of this damage is caused by how they influence others to follow in the same wicked ways. Therefore, if you wish to be a disciple of Christ and make disciples, you must determine to be all the way for Christ!

# The Need For Spiritual Mentors

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Discipleship is similar to our idea of mentorship. People often talk about having “mentors” in their profession. This is someone who really helped them learn a certain trade and become proficient in it. And, whenever they run into difficulties, they ask their mentors for help. Yet, while the Bible does not use the word “mentor,” the concept certainly is used. Jesus wants His disciples to help others become and live as disciples.

## ***Jesus wants His disciples to multiply***

I am afraid that many disciples of Christ today have missed the Biblical concept of making disciples of others. I am afraid that it is far too uncommon for new disciples to be added to the Lord. But, while the Bible does use the language of people being added to the church (such as in Acts 2:47), it also commonly uses the language of multiplication.

Think back over what we have already considered on this. Acts 6:1 says the “number of the disciples was multiplying.” Acts 6:7 says that “the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.” Acts 9:31 says that the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria “were multiplied.” And, Acts 12:24 says that “the word of God grew and multiplied.”

Now, why is it important to see that the number of disciples was *multiplying* rather than just disciples being *added*? Multiplication increases in multiples. So,  $6 + 6 = 12$ . But,  $6 \times 6 = 36$ , because it is  $6 + 6 + 6 + 6 + 6 + 6$ . It is exponential growth. And, Jesus recognized that this was the best way for His kingdom to grow. It’s like compounding interest in a retirement fund. Rather than just getting back a return on the initial amount that is invested, compounding interest gives you a return on the initial principal plus the additional interest that has been gained.

Think about how 2 Timothy 2:2 explains this process in disciple-making. Once again, it says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The apostle Paul taught Timothy. So, Paul helped Timothy live as a disciple. That kind of growth in the kingdom was good. But, that is not where it was to stop.

Now, Timothy was to go out and find other people he could help be disciples. Suppose he found ten during his lifetime (I have no way of knowing how many disciples Timothy helped to make). Then, suppose those ten would go out and each help ten other people be disciples. Now, you would have 100 disciples. Then, suppose those 100 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 1,000 disciples. Then, suppose those 1,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 10,000. Then, suppose those 10,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 100,000 disciples. Then, suppose those 100,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 1 million disciples.

Now, this is purely an illustration. But, it does help you to appreciate the multiplication that happens whenever disciples make disciples who make disciples. From starting with a single disciple (the apostle Paul) working with a single person (Timothy) could result in this great growth in the number of disciples. And, the more disciples who make disciples, the greater growth the kingdom will experience (potentially). Of course, this is all dependent upon people believing and obeying the message of the gospel.

## ***Stages of spiritual maturity***

Whenever you first become a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are like a newborn baby (spiritually). You are immature and weak in the faith. You need someone to serve as a “mentor” for you so that you can increase in your knowledge and learn about what it means to live as a Christian. But, as you grow and mature in the faith, you should lean on your “mentor” (or “mentors”) less and less. And, you should start becoming a “mentor” of others. Perhaps you can only help one person at first. Then, maybe you can help a few. Then, perhaps you can help an even greater number of people.

Listen to Hebrews 5:12-14. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

God knows you are not spiritually “full-grown” the moment you become a disciple. He knows that you only have a basic understanding of His word (i.e. the

milk of the word). But, He does expect you to begin a process of spiritual growth and maturity (see 2 Peter 3:18). You need to be weaned off the milk and progress to an increasingly deeper understanding of God's word. As you do this, you will become more and more equipped to help other people follow Christ.

However, there is a problem whenever disciples do not make this progression. Sometimes they become disciples and never get off the milk of the word. So, they continue to act like spiritual babies and do not increase in their abilities to help other people be disciples. But, this ought not to be so!

Listen to the stages of growth that the apostle John seems to address in 1 John 2:12-14. "I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one."

It may be that John has designated three stages of growth for disciples in this text: Little children, young men, and fathers. The first stage would be one of spiritual immaturity. The second would progress into greater spiritual knowledge and strength. The third would indicate a place of great spiritual maturity. And, each step along this spiritual path should result in a greater ability to "mentor" others to be disciples of Jesus Christ – reaching the point you are a "father" to someone else in the faith (not in the sense of having a special title or authority over another, but only in the sense that Paul called Timothy, "a true son in the faith" in 1 Timothy 1:2). Thus, you should grow in your faith to the point that your faith can multiply!

### ***Disciples should mentor others into discipleship***

Look at the stages of the "Great Commission" as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 again. Jesus said to go and make disciples of all the nations. This involved baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then continuing to teach them all things He commanded.

So, disciples of Christ must take a "big picture" approach in helping others be disciples. It is not a short process. Just as someone (or perhaps several people)

have helped and continue to help you be a disciple of Christ, you should do your part in helping people be disciples of Christ throughout their lives. This means doing the initial teaching whenever it is needed, helping people be baptized when that is needed, and continuing to teach them whenever they have reached that point.

But, every step of the way, you are striving to help people to be disciples of Jesus Christ. You are both providing the necessary instruction and the proper example to help people follow Jesus Christ – just like Paul, who said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

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## **Conclusion**

If you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you will be working to make disciples for Christ. You will be sincerely following Jesus Christ in your own life and you will be looking for opportunities to help others do the same. Now, recognizing this truth, the remainder of this study will try and help you learn and encourage you to accomplish this work.

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## **Study Questions**

What did Jesus command in the "Great Commission"?

### **1. Disciples Should Work To Make Disciples**

Explain how Jesus worked to make disciples.

How are Jesus' disciples taught to make disciples?

What is the goal of teaching the gospel? How do some people get the focus wrong in this area?

## **2. Disciple-Makers Should Be Disciples**

How are true disciples like salt and light?

How are some “fake disciples”? What is the danger of fake disciples?

## **3. The Need For Spiritual Mentors**

How does the Bible speak of disciples *multiplying*? Why is it important to see that the disciples *multiplied*? How does this principle apply to disciple-making today?

What are some stages of spiritual maturity? How will your spiritual growth impact your ability to make disciples for Jesus Christ?

How does the “Great Commission” help you recognize the need to be a spiritual “mentor” of others?