

- What, exactly, does it mean to be a Christian?
In the Bible, followers of Jesus are called Christians 3 times, believers 15 times and disciples 235 times. It is obviously so important for us to understand what that means if it is so important to Jesus.
- To do that, we need to know that this word disciple is not unique to Christianity. A Disciple is someone who *learns* from another to become *like* them.
- Everyone is a disciple of someone, or something. Whoever, or whatever that is, has a significant influence on your life.
 - We learn this at a young age, but it reaches a very embarrassing stage I suppose in our teenage years.
 - Long before I was a disciple of Jesus, I was a disciple of... For me, it was prominent musicians...
 - I followed them... I learned from them, and I ended up becoming like them. ***I was a disciple!***
- But it not just me, and it's not just a certain age group.
 - Every time you see someone trying to follow the career path of a successful business woman or man who they give much attention to, they are functioning like a disciple!
- So, the question is who are you following?
 - Whoever you follow will define your life's mission and purpose! Ultimately, your eternity and destiny!
 - For those not Christians... what does it mean?
 - For those who are Christians... Could people tell?
- See, In the same way that every *is* a disciple, every is also making disciples, (whether they realise it!)
- Your life is an influence. The question simply is, how are you using that influence? How should you be influencing?
- When Jesus began his ministry, he began preaching the good news and call people to follow him, to *be* disciples. And here, before he ascends into heaven, he tells them to *make* disciples.
 - What on earth does that mean?
- For Christians, the term discipleship has come to mean different things to different people.

- When some use the word, they think of a process of maturity.
 - They think of deep dive conversations in early morning coffee shops, studying creeds, reading 30 chapters of scripture and memorising at least ten.
 - And so, these people, when they ask about discipleship in the church, this is what they are thinking.
 - Are you being discipled? Meaning, are you meeting up for coffee regularly to memorise scripture.
- When others talk about discipleship, they think of *only* evangelism
 - In other words, it's about mission, *not* maturity. Wining people to Jesus, investing in evangelistic events etc.
 - When this type of person asks "are you making disciples?" they mean, are you hitting streets, running courses etc.
- What I want you to see from Matthew 28, is that discipleship is actually about *both... and understanding this will change who influences you... and how you influence others for good*.

1. Discipleship means knowing *and* showing Jesus

- a. Jesus, of course had already claimed authority in his ministry
 - i. But in light of his rejection by the masses when he was crucified, he re-affirms his authority with fresh perspective for his followers
 1. His life was not merely taken, it was given! He has sacrificed himself on the cross "as a ransom"
 - ii. He has conquered death showing that his sacrifice was perfect and that all he said was true!
 - iii. This is not a *new* authority but a *vindicated* authority
- b. Jesus begins by reminding us who he is. This is where the Christian life begins: Knowing Jesus.
 - i. In light of this, he gives his followers a mission...
- c. Now, this passage has often been referred to as the great commission, and there are four verbs that help us understand what, exactly, Jesus is commissioning us to do.
- d. But I want you to notice something, that becomes very clear when you look at it in the original language. There is only one command, the rest are supporting verbs.

- e. The main command is not “Go” its “Make Disciples.”
 - i. So, if the big idea from Jesus is Make Disciples, how do we do that?
- f. We do this by going... to anyone and everyone
 - i. This ranges from introducing people to Jesus for the first time, as well as veterans growing in the faith!
 - ii. So, the first stage of making disciples is by being intentional about the people around you!
 - iii. And this goes on to mean being intentional about investing in people who are Christians!
 - iv. See, it’s not only referring to evangelism or maturity! Making disciples refers to BOTH.
- g. The reason that discipleship is about both mission and maturity is because Christians need the gospel as well as non-Christians. We are saved *and* sanctified by the gospel!
- h. We must start and continue with Jesus as his follower. We must meet Jesus and mature in Jesus. This is captured in the next two words...
- i. Baptising
 - i. We hear the gospel, realise we are fallen and yet also loved, we believe upon Christ and become born again
 - ii. Physical baptism represents that we have been brought into the life of God. It demonstrates that we are identifying with Jesus!
 - iii. Those who have heard the truth of the gospel, understood and received are to be baptized
 - iv. But Physical baptism represents something greater... we are baptized into the “name” Father, Son, and Spirit
 - v. Baptized into a culture you think of everything in relation to your identity, immersing yourself
 - 1. “I’m a musician”, “I’m a parent” or “I’m an actor”
 - vi. We help others become immersed in the life of God.
- j. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded
 - i. All who follow Christ not only have a responsibility to know Christ and to show the things of Christ to others!

- ii. At its core, disciple-making is about teaching. And we teach with words.
 - 1. Various ways we do this
 - 2. Formal and informal, public and private
 - 3. There is the Gift of teaching in the church, there is the responsibility of the pastor to teach the Words of the Bible!
 - a. This is what we do on Sundays!
 - b. This is what we do through classes!
- iii. This kind of teaching is a part of your discipleship!
- k. But there is another sense in which teaching is broader!
 - i. Jesus did not *only* say to teach people. He says “teach them to *DO* what I have commanded”

Deut 6:6-7 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **7** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

- ii. The law was to be in their hearts and minds and on their lips (24/7) not just on hour a week
- l. This goes beyond hearing, it must be put into practice
 - 1. Clean your room example
 - 2. Moving into a new neighborhood
- m. We are to model what the Christian life looks like!
 - i. When I teach my kids to ride a bike
 - ii. When I teach someone how to pray... share... show!
- n. We are not only to *tell* people *about* Jesus, but *show* what it looks like to follow Jesus
 - i. Bringing the teaching into our circumstances
- o. To be a disciple-maker is to help model to other people how to deal with everyday issues as a follower of Jesus. This ultimately begins with Scripture, but also through books, relationships, experience etc.
- p. But all of this is not something you do all by yourself...

2. Discipleship is a Community Project

- a. Look who is in this scene, and how Jesus commissions them.

- b. The first thing we notice, is that discipleship is for everyone. Even you! Did you notice verse 16-17?
 - i. Jesus calls together a group of broken messy individuals! Some worshipped, some struggled with doubt... but Jesus still commissions them
 - ii. I think he does this for many reasons, but one of them must be this: All of us will struggle with doubt, but one of the ways we win the war with doubt is through obedience, giving ourselves to his purpose.
- c. Discipleship is a call for *every* believer, not *special* believers
 - i. Jesus does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called!
- d. And it is something we do together.
- e. Note: Jesus spoke to them in community, commissioned them as a community, to bring people into community.
 - i. Jesus, after he was resurrected, did not meet with them one-on-one, he gathers them together!
 - ii. Jesus calls the *community* to make disciples.
- f. When people hear the word discipleship, they often picture a one-on-one mentoring commitment involving, yes coffee or tea, and one person with grey hair, and a younger person.
- g. While this idea of older men and women meeting regularly with other, younger men and women one-on-one is a *part* of discipleship, it certainly not the *whole* of discipleship!
 - i. Listen, it is a myth that only one-person disciples you.
- h. I do not have ONE person that I go to, I have a family
 - i. This broadens your perspective!
 - ii. You don't need just *one* person to tell you about Jesus, or to mature in Jesus! But a community!
 - 1. We all have something to teach to each other, and something to learn from each other!
 - iii. And there may be specific areas of life you want to learn about, that's good! Go find them!
- i. There is no monopoly on who can be can disciple or who can be disciplined
 - i. In that sense, Paul the apostle is a wonderful example!

Romans 1:11-12 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—**12** that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

- ii. The sad thing is that many in the church think that they should only be discipled by one person: not true
- iii. Please, don't put the weight of learning everything you need to know on ONE person! That's too much!
- iv. But a community, can teach you...
- j. Unhealthy expectations
 - i. "will you be my personal Holy Spirit??"
 - ii. that you only learn in certain contexts
 - iii. Or, that you will only invest in certain people
 - iv. In that sense, for some Christians, making disciples is like dating... "I am looking for a..."
- k. And remember... people will let you down! That's why you need to know:

3. Discipleship comes with a Divine Promise

- a. What you cannot miss, is that Discipleships begins and ends with Jesus. Just like this section begins and ends with Jesus.
- b. **Jesus sends you with power** (Power and authority)
 - i. This whole task given to you does not rest on your strength, your power, your authority! V 18
 - ii. He is saying this: "You are in the closest possible association with the One who has all power!
 - iii. This "so" should fill you and I with boldness and confidence. Our resources are not meager!
 - 1. The Holy Spirit empowers you to BE a witness!
 - iv. What makes the efforts of the effective church is the power of Jesus!
 - v. We often get discouraged our effort might not impress" but what will always be the chief attraction factor for the church in Ventura is the power of Jesus

c. Jesus comforts you with presence

- Aren't we afraid that something could jeopardise or ruin our relationships? Well the two things that can ruin it with God are sin and death... and Jesus conquered both!

- At the end says “I will be with you always, even to the end” He didn’t say “on your good days”.
- Religion says God will be with you on your good days,
- The gospel says God will be with you even on your bad ones. Though your circumstances will vary His love for you will never vary, his presence with you will not fade.
- Even after Peter denied Jesus when he died on the cross, Jesus rose from the dead and days later sought out Peter... *not to shame him, but restore him!*
- And when he did he said two words to Peter... they were the first two words that Jesus ever said to him and also the last two words he said to Peter in John’s gospel. Follow me.
- His relationship is not built on how well we love God, but how perfectly he has loved us!
 - The cross means our forgiveness is already secured... we simply must trust and rest in it... and from that nearness to Jesus, you live out your life.
- Peter went on to show great courage... and where did this courage come from? He had been with Jesus.
- As we live for Jesus, we hope that people would know Jesus
- Challenge... “Can others tell that we have been with Jesus?”
 - Some of you have not yet decided to follow Jesus
 - He invites you today! He is Lord and Saviour, give him the lead! Stop trying to save yourself.
 - Some of you are following... but at a distance...
 - He doesn't push you away, he draws you near!
 - Others... stay near! Don't let your love grow cold!
- What Jesus wants... is you... for you to be with him, the very source of joy, life and peace... the greatest gift he could give you is the gift of himself... this is the heart of Christianity, the gospel, it’s all found in this invitation... follow me.