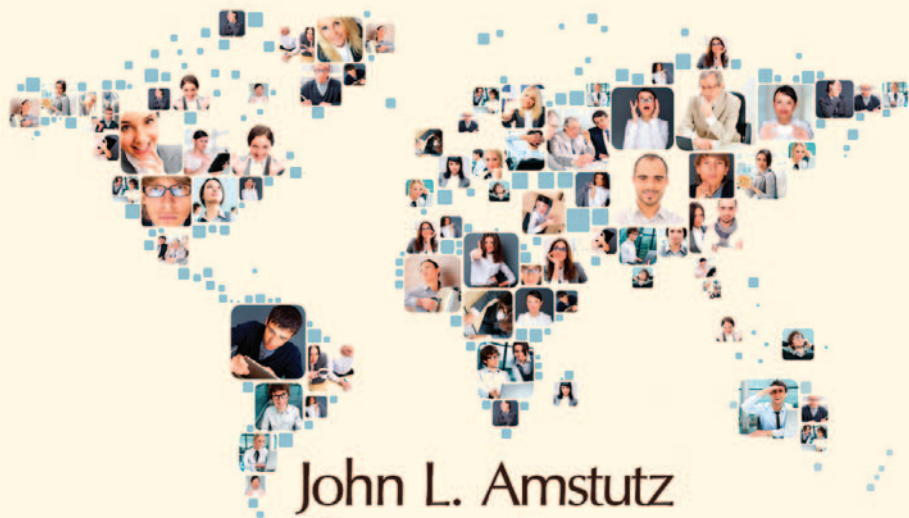


STAGE 1

# MAKING & MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

THE MASTER'S PLAN OF DISCIPLESHIP



John L. Amstutz

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL  
AND  
STUDY GUIDE

FOREWARD BY ED STETZER





# MAKING & MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

THE MASTER'S PLAN OF DISCIPLESHIP



John L. Amstutz

# Making and Multiplying Disciples: The Master's Plan of Discipleship

by John L. Amstutz

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Making and multiplying disciples—there are many who have modeled and mentored the author in discipleship. Disciples make disciples—by their fruit you know them. They reproduce after their own kind. Ralph and Loretta Amstutz were such disciples. My parents were true followers of Jesus, the real deal—doers of the word. They not only led people to Christ, including their four children, they did “follow-up.” They were my first disciplers. By example and exhortation, I was taught the word and way of the Lord. Thank you, Dad and Mom, for helping me to know the truth and showing me how to live it. Thank you for discipling me and helping me do likewise with my children. Truly there is no greater joy than to know that our children are walking in the truth, and now are leading their children to know and follow Jesus too.

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the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men”—especially her husband (Romans 14:17, 18). Thanks, honey!

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# Foreword

While discipleship has become a buzzword in evangelical Christianity, far too many are not actively engaged in it. There is often a disconnect between what we say we value and what we actually value. We say we value making disciples, but we measure success based on attendance, which instead places the value on consumers, who often are merely able to repeat the right words when asked. The most aggressively growing churches in the Two-Thirds World are those who recognize that while providing doctrinally correct answers is important, living rightly in response to those answers is most important. That is discipleship.

In this study guide, *Making and Multiplying Disciples: The Master's Plan of Discipleship*, John walks through the Gospel of Matthew detailing why the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations is the logical conclusion to the teaching of Christ recorded throughout the book. It is not simply tacked on at the end, but rather the last words of Christ on earth sum up His consistent message.

John makes it clear that biblically-speaking there can be no such thing as “non-discipleship Christianity.” To be a Christian is to be a disciple and to be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker. That is what will actually foster a movement—discipleship, which is what we have been called to do from the beginning.

Ed Stetzer  
President  
LifeWay Research

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

## Preface

“Make disciples of all nations”—Christ’s last command. The book of Acts tells the story of how those first followers of Jesus did it. They preached the gospel and made disciples who made disciples who made disciples. It was the making and multiplying of disciples that made possible the continuing growth of the church and the expansion of the gospel.

Earliest believers were called disciples. They were doers of the word, followers of “the Way.” They were hearers who put into practice what Christ taught. Not only did they believe in Jesus, they continued in his word and truly became his disciples. Walking in his ways, doing his will, reflecting his character, they became like their Master. Such disciples multiplied. They reproduced their own kind—followers of Jesus—who did likewise.

Jesus told his disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16). Making and multiplying disciples is bearing fruit that lasts. Evangelism without discipleship is like fathering children without raising them. Leading people to make decisions for Christ without discipleship is like having a wedding without a marriage. It is like saying “I do” without following through. The process of being fruitful and multiplying is short-circuited. Bearing fruit that lasts becomes impossible. It is only as believers become disciples that Christ’s mission will be fulfilled. Making and multiplying of disciples of those who believed made possible the spread of the gospel to the nations in the first century... and every century since the Day of Pentecost.

In the book, *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes*, I have identified and described how the early church in the book of Acts nurtured healthy national church

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

movements through a four-stage, infinitely reproducible process. They multiplied disciples, leaders, churches, and missionary-sending movements (see the Appendix).<sup>1</sup> The first stage, the multiplying of disciples, made possible all subsequent stages. In a word, discipleship is the key to the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission.

This manual is a study of the first stage—how the early church made and multiplied disciples. It is a study of the Gospel of Matthew. It is a review of the five major sections in the book that summarize the teachings Christ taught his disciples to obey and put into practice. Simply, it is a study of the “original discipleship manual” of the apostles who followed the Master's plan of making and multiplying disciples.

Concluding this handbook is a study guide to help you in making and multiplying disciples who walk in his ways and reach and teach others to do likewise—among all nations until he comes!

John L. Amstutz  
August, 2013

## Introduction: Disciples of All Nations

“**M**ake disciples of all nations!” Christ’s last command to eleven fearful, worshiping followers on a mountain in northern Palestine nearly two thousand years ago is an amazing and remarkable mandate. It is amazing in that it was given to a band of common folk—Galilean fishermen, tax collectors, and working-class individuals. It is remarkable in that Jesus expected this motley crew to reach a world. But perhaps it is not as amazing as it may appear. Their Master promised he would be with them, he would send the Holy Spirit to empower them, and they would go with his authority. Perhaps it is also not as remarkable as it first appears since he was telling them to do as they had been done by. I have made you my disciples; now go and do likewise—make disciples of others who will be my followers as you are. And they, in turn, will make and multiply disciples until there are Christ-followers in every nation.

Further, in his final instructions, Jesus told his disciples how to make disciples of all nations. All four Gospel writers record these instructions. They are found in what has come to be known as the Great Commission:

### **Matthew 28:18–20**

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### **Mark 16:15–18**

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these

signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well.”

**Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:8**

“...The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

**John 20:21–23**

“...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

It is interesting that in the original language the Great Commission found in these four accounts contains only two imperatives, or commands: preach and make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are participles that describe how preaching and making disciples will take place. Therefore, from these accounts Christ’s Great Commission can be summed up in these words:

“Going with my authority as my witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit, *preach the good news* of repentance and forgiveness of sins in my name, baptizing those who repent and believe, and *make disciples* by teaching them to obey all I have commanded. And as you do this, beginning in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, I will be with you to the end of the age.”

*Simply, Christ commanded his disciples to:*

- (1) *“preach the good news” and,*
- (2) *“make followers of me... among all nations.”*

Simply, Christ commanded his disciples to (1) “preach the good news” and (2) “make followers of me...among all nations.” And the great assumption of this Great Commission is that his disciples would go and do so. Why? Because they, like their Master, would be empowered by the same Spirit to proclaim good news and, as his disciples, they would obey his commands, including this last one. Like Jesus, they would be “endued with power from on high” when the Holy Spirit came upon them. The dynamic power and presence of the Spirit of Jesus himself would provide the impetus to go as his witnesses to all nations. Therefore, after his resurrection Jesus spoke to his disciples saying, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21–22). As Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21–22; 4:18–19), so we also are empowered by the same Spirit to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Going in the power of the Spirit, the disciples were to make followers of their Master in all nations. Jesus had said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Clearly, the mandate of the Great Commission is to make disciples among all peoples (*ethne*) before Christ returns. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ is to result in disciples within every group of people on the planet. As an expansion of Christ’s initial commission to the twelve apostles to go only to “the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:5–6), this is indeed a Great Commission. It is great in that it is universal, worldwide—a mandate to go to all nations. It is great in that it is transformational, life changing—a mandate to evangelize in depth. It is not merely the making of converts in all countries;



it is the making of disciples in all nations, all peoples. Among all *ethne* disciples are to be made of believers who not only receive Christ as Savior, but who obey and put into practice all he commanded, beginning with the first command, which is to be baptized and openly declare their commitment to him as their Lord. Disciples are those who respond to Jesus' invitation to "come unto me." They are those who also respond to his invitation to "come, follow me." Disciples are those who have decided to follow Jesus and learn to live as he lived.

## **Becoming a Disciple of Jesus**

*"Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."*

In a sense, "non-discipleship Christianity" is a contradiction. The words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are to the point: "Discipleship means adherence to Christ...Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea."<sup>2</sup> To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ. Yes, it is true that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). But it should also be true that if we confess him as our Lord, we will do what he says. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Yes, we have been saved by grace through faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). But we are saved to do good works, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

True faith bears fruit, for faith without works is dead. It is through love that faith is expressed (Galatians 5:6). How will Jesus know that we truly love him? "If you love me, you will

obey what I command” (John 14:15). And how will we know we truly know him? “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands . . . if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know that we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:3, 5–6). Paul wrote the following to the Ephesian believers: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1–2). To truly believe the good news is to live it. But what is the good news? What is believing?

## **Believing the Good News**

*What is the good news? It is that God’s kingdom is here; that his King has come bringing salvation.*

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River the Holy Spirit came upon him. It was then that Jesus began to preach the good news of God. “‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mark 1:14b–15). And what is the “good news”? It is the good news that God’s kingdom is here, that his King has come bringing salvation. This is reflected in the words of the angel to the shepherds that first Christmas night: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10–11). What makes this good news, so good? Clearly, such good news assumes the existence of news that is not so good. Otherwise there would be no good news.

The gospel, the story of Jesus, is called good news because it is the story of why he came. Matthew’s Gospel makes the reason for Jesus’ coming clear: “. . . and you are to give him

the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). God’s Son came to save us. Save us from what? Our sins. But what is so bad about sin? Everybody makes mistakes; nobody is perfect. And that is the point. Sin is a disease that has infected everyone—“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). And such sin is devastating in its results. Sin is a deadly disease. It is not merely like a cold; it is like cancer. It kills. The end result is death, not just physical death, but spiritual, eternal death—separation from God. The Bible calls it “perishing,” or “eternal destruction” (John 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:9–10). This is definitely not very “good” news.

But here is the good news. Christ died for our sins, not his own, for he was without sin. Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4–6)

Jesus, God’s Son, died for us. He took our place. He paid the price of our sin. He who was without sin took upon himself our sin. On the cross he suffered not only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God—as he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). But God did not abandon him. He raised him back to life. God now offers us a cure for our deadly disease—forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Now that is good news! And here is the best news of all—it is free! We cannot earn it, we cannot pay for it, we do not deserve it. It is a gift. We can only accept it or reject it. But why would anyone reject such a free gift? Many people

think it is too good to be true. Some refuse to admit they have a deadly disease. Some are ashamed because they believe they have gone too far. And some do not even realize they have a terminal illness.

So what can change our mind? Better, who can change our mind? The Spirit of God—he can convince us of our true condition (John 16:7–11). He can convict us of our sin, showing us God's standard of righteousness (rightness) and the end result of our “falling short” of this standard. God's Spirit helps us first see the bad news, but then he helps us see the good news. There is a cure. Jesus is the answer to our deadly disease. But the choice is ours. Will we agree with God's diagnosis and accept his gracious offer, or we can continue to “take our chances” and turn down the gift of forgiveness and life?

If you choose to accept the good news, the first step is to accept the diagnosis, admitting you are a sinner—you have a terminal illness. You must change your mind—turn from self-medicating and trying to save yourself. Confess your sin and ask God to forgive you for trying to play God and fix yourself. Humble yourself; ask God for help. Receive God's cure; fully trust Jesus to save you and be the Lord of your life. Finally, choose to follow Jesus; learn to obey his instructions, doing life his way rather than your way. You can make this commitment by praying the following prayer:

*Dear God, I admit I am a sinner. I confess I have pushed you out of my life. I am truly sorry. I repent. I ask you to forgive me. I believe Jesus died and rose again to save me from my sin. I now, the best I know how, receive Him and put my full trust in Him as my Savior. I confess Him as my Lord. I surrender my life to Him and will follow Him the rest of my days. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for giving me eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

If you prayed this prayer for the first time (or if you prayed it as a reaffirmation of your faith in Christ), welcome to the family of God, for “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13), and all who call on his name are born anew, born of the Spirit of God. They are a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). They have passed from death to life (John 5:24). They have been delivered from the kingdom (rule) of darkness, and brought into the kingdom (rule) of God’s Son (Colossians 1:13–14). Now that is good news!

### **Living the Good News**

*In Christ you have been born again, brought to life.  
Now live in him and become like him. Live the good news.*

Having believed the good news, now what? As a newborn child, “crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:2). “Just as you have received Jesus Christ as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in . . . the faith” (Colossians 2:6–7a). Just as you received new life through repentance and faith in Christ as Lord, now live and grow in this new life. In Christ you have been born again, brought to life. Now live in him and become like him. Live the good news.

As Jesus prepared to return to heaven, he instructed his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing those who believe and teaching them to obey all he had commanded them. Quite simply, he told them to go and do to others what he had done to them—share the good news and make disciples, Christ-followers, who would become living expressions of his life as his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

The first step in becoming a disciple is baptism. There are at least five reasons for this:

- Jesus told us to be baptized (Matthew 28:19). If we love him, we will obey his commands. Baptism is the first one—the first step in discipleship.
- Baptism indicates the washing away of our sins (Acts 22:16). It is a baptism of repentance and forgiveness.
- Baptism expresses our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20). We have died to our sinful way of living and have been raised to walk in a new way of living, His way.
- Baptism is a public identification with Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:38). He is God; we are not. Having forsaken all other “gods” including ourselves, we are not ashamed to call him our King and Master and follow him.
- Baptism is an identification with all who are his, the body of Christ, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). We belong to Jesus and we also belong to those who have given their lives to him. We are members of God’s eternal family, and together we grow to become like our Savior.

Baptism is “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Although baptism in the book of Acts is in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:45), or the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16; 19:5), to be baptized in his name is to be initiated and immersed into the fullness of life in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (Colossians 2:9–10). It is a baptism into the Father’s family, the Son’s fellowship, and the Spirit’s presence and power. Thus begins a journey of life-changing transformation as followers of Jesus Christ become living expressions of the good news of the gospel. Jesus not only said, “Come to me,” but also “Follow me.” To follow Christ is to become his disciple who learns to do life his way.

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

**Part ONE:**  
Making Disciples



*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

## Part One - Making Disciples: The Teaching of the Apostles

*Of all the Gospels, it appears that Matthew may well have designed his Gospel as a discipling manual.*

“Make disciples! Teach them to obey all I have commanded.” This the disciples did as thousands repented and were baptized on the Day of Pentecost. They baptized and taught them. So it was these earliest baptized believers who gave themselves to “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). The apostles taught what Jesus taught them: to obey all he commanded. His commands “can be summed up in three statements: love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, love your neighbor as yourself, love your enemies.”<sup>3</sup> These commands are found in the Gospels, especially in the Gospel of Matthew where the sayings of Jesus are arranged according to topic rather than chronology. It appears that Matthew may well have designed his gospel as a discipling manual.<sup>4</sup> There was probably no one better to teach all Christ had commanded than Matthew, one of the twelve apostles who had been with him from the beginning. It is interesting that Matthew’s name comes from the same root word as “disciple” (*mathetes*) which means “one taught or trained.”

With the growing number and dispersion of believers throughout the eastern Mediterranean, the teaching of all Christ had commanded began to outstrip the ability of the twelve apostles to visit personally and teach all who were coming to Christ. It may well have been that one of the major reasons Matthew wrote his gospel was to make possible the making of disciples far beyond Israel. Further, with the death of some of the apostles, what Jesus taught had to be preserved so that his teaching could be communicated and that disciples

could be made of the nations. If this is so, it is interesting that Matthew grouped the teaching of Jesus into major sections suggested by the words “when he had finished all these sayings.”<sup>5</sup> Matthew used this phrase to transition from the words to the works of Jesus five times within his Gospel (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Matthew also often grouped sayings, stories and parables into sets of three, five, seven or tens which may have been done to aid the memory of both teachers and learners.<sup>6</sup> This would be especially helpful in a largely oral culture like that of the first century. Of these sections, the first is known as “The Sermon on the Mount” and is the most extensive section of the teachings of Jesus. It appears to be a grouping together of the sayings of Jesus, for in Luke, the most chronologically arranged gospel, these sayings are found at various points in his Galilean ministry (Luke 6:17–49; 11:1–4; 12:22–31).

## Chapter 1

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# Discipleship 1.0: The Sermon on the Mount - His Way (Matthew 5-7)

*The teaching of Jesus is obedience-oriented—teaching to be put into practice, to make doers of the word.*

**W**ith this understanding, let us turn to this first and longest of the five sections of the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. It is found in chapters five through seven. The focus is putting into practice the teachings they had received, becoming not only hearers but also doers of the word. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock... But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand” (Matthew 7:24, 26).

An outline of the Sermon on the Mount suggests at least a dozen major subjects:

Introduction (5:1–2)

- The Beatitudes: Genuine Happiness (5:3–12)
- Salt and Light: Making a Difference (5:13–16)
- Loving Others: True Righteousness (5:17–48)
- Loving God: Habits of the Heart (6:1–18)
- Singleness of Heart: Mastered by the Master (6:19–24)
- First Things First: Worry-free living (6:25–34)
- Reaping and Sowing: Judging and Discerning (7:1–6)
- God’s Good Gifts: Ask, Seek, Knock (7:7–11)
- The Golden Rule: Becoming Like the God We Serve (7:12)
- Two Doors, Two Roads: Which Way? (7:13–14)
- Good and Bad Fruit: Genuine and Counterfeit (7:15–23)
- Wise and Foolish Builders: Hearers and Doers (7:24–27)

Conclusion (7:28–29)

## **Introduction (Matthew 5:1–2)**

Jesus said to his first disciples, “Come, follow me.” Andrew, Peter, James and John left their fishing business to follow this rabbi from Nazareth, as did others such as Matthew the tax collector. As Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and sickness, news about him spread north into Syria, south into Jerusalem and Judea, and east of the Jordan River into the Decapolis (ten Greek cities). On occasions when crowds gathered, Jesus not only preached and healed but also taught about the kingdom of God. His disciples were the primary focus of his teaching. Sitting down, as rabbinical teachers did when they wanted to address their followers with authority, Jesus began to teach his disciples as they gathered around him in the midst of the crowds.

## The Beatitudes: Genuine Happiness (Matthew 5:3–12)

*Why is it that life in God's kingdom seems to be just the opposite of the kingdoms of this world, an upside down kingdom? Because it is!*

The teaching of Jesus began with what have been called the “Beatitudes” (“blesseds”) that described truly blessed persons, those who were genuinely experiencing the “good life.” Jesus gave eight characteristics of such truly happy people. They are those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, who hunger and thirst for what is right, who are merciful, who are pure in heart, who are peacemakers, and who are persecuted for doing what is right. This kind of a kingdom certainly does not seem to be the one we know on planet Earth, where those to be envied are those who are rich, who have no problems, who know how to get ahead, who never lack, who are assertive, who are motivated to succeed, who are enforcers of the peace and who are only opposed by those who do not have what they have. This is supposedly the good life!

Why is it that life in God's kingdom seems to be just the opposite of the kingdoms of this world—an upside down kingdom? Because it is! In his kingdom it is more blessed to give than get, to die is to live, and to lose your life is to find it. Citizens of this kingdom seem to be marching to a different beat—and they are! Someone changed the music, and that someone is God. Let's look again at this new “musical score” and note the promise given for each of the eight characteristics of those who are citizens of his new kingdom. The following are those who are truly blessed and happy:

- Those who humbly recognize their poverty before God, God's kingdom belongs to them.

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

- Those who mourn over that which God mourns, their own sinfulness and estrangement from him, God gives them his own comfort.
- Those who have given God control of their lives, they will receive the earth as their inheritance.
- Those who long for God's right and righteous ways, they will be truly satisfied and filled.
- Those who treat others with forgiveness and grace as God has treated them, they will receive God's mercy and kindness.
- Those whose singular desire is to please God, they will know God as a friend.
- Those who make peace where there is conflict and estrangement, they will be called God's own children.
- Those who are opposed for doing what is right, they will become partakers and inheritors of God's kingdom. These are those who are insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused as Christ-followers. They rejoice because their reward in heaven is great, for so were God's emissaries of the past treated and rewarded.

*Christ-followers have been born anew to a new point of view. They are new creations. Old attitudes are being replaced with a new mindset—the mind of Christ.*

When God is king, when Jesus is Lord and we no longer are, life works as originally intended. These “be-attitudes” characterize a new way of thinking. They reflect a changed outlook and perspective. Christ-followers have been born anew to a new point of view. They are new creations. Old attitudes are being replaced with a new mindset—the mind of Christ. God loves to change us! He is committed to our transformation. He is intent on remaking us into the image of his Son. He is altering our worldview and way of thinking. He is refashioning our character. Truly, “in Christ” our old life is gone; a new life has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17). Clearly, the beatitudes reflect transformed thinking and living. They reflect the actions and attitudes of people who have been born again:

- They are poor in spirit and have humbled themselves.
- They have mourned and grieved over their waywardness.
- They are meek and submitted to God.
- They are hungry and thirsty for God’s right and righteous ways.
- They are merciful and treat others as God has treated them.
- They are pure in heart and have a singular desire to please God.
- They are peacemakers and know the peace of God.
- They are opposed for doing what is right and righteous, not for doing what is wrong.

### **Salt and Light: Making a Difference (Matthew 5:13–16)**

*As these “be-attitudes” increasingly characterize disciples, such Christ-followers are so different that they make a difference.*

No longer being conformed to the pattern and ways of this world, Christ’s followers are being transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). And transformed people have a transforming impact. Jesus said they are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13–16). As these “be-attitudes” increasingly characterize disciples, such Christ-followers are so different that they make a difference—just as salt does. They season and flavor society, preventing decay and promoting righteousness. Unlike salt that has lost its saltiness, true disciples influence and impact their world. Further, like light they penetrate and illuminate the darkness, exposing the works of darkness and displaying the works of light. Rather than hiding under a bushel basket of fear and intimidation, they let their light shine so that the good works they do are seen and help others honor God (Matthew 5:16). Like their master, they seek to do good to everyone. The apostle Paul said, “Therefore, as we have



opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10).

Jesus, anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit, did good wherever he went. He healed all who were under the devil’s power because God was with him (Acts 10:38). Likewise, his disciples learned to devote themselves to doing what is good, showing deeds of kindness and helping those in need. They became eager to do good (Titus 2:14). And in so doing his disciples made the teaching about their Savior attractive (Titus 2:10). Followers of Christ are in the world, but not of the world. They are citizens of another kingdom, God’s kingdom. They are “blessed” and a blessing—the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

### **Loving Others: True Righteousness (Matthew 5:17–48)**

*The righteousness of God’s kingdom goes beyond keeping rules. It is an inner rightness of the heart. It deals with motives.*

Jesus did not come to abolish and do away with the Law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets in the Old Testament. He came to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). In fact, Jesus went so far as to say that not even the smallest detail of God’s law would disappear until its purpose was achieved. Heaven and earth would pass away before that happened (Matthew 5:18). In other words, Jesus claimed that everything found in the commandments would be fulfilled. He said that anyone who broke even the “smallest” one, and taught others to do likewise, would be called “smallest” or least in the kingdom. But those who obeyed God’s law and taught others to do so would be called “great” in the kingdom (Matthew 5:19). Jesus was saying that, unless a person’s righteousness went beyond that of those who teach the law and seriously seek to obey it, he or she cannot even enter God’s kingdom at all! (Matthew 5:20). Was Jesus demanding an even stricter observance of religious rules than the most highly respected religious people

of the day (the Pharisees) and the acknowledged experts of the law (the scribes)? It could appear so.

However, to clarify and illustrate what he meant, Jesus gave six examples of true righteousness, the “surpassing righteousness” required of his followers. Jesus contrasted his teaching with what had been taught about the Law of Moses. Like a good teacher, Jesus quoted the Scripture and then explained it.

*“You have heard that it was said...”*

“Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.”  
(Matthew 5:21; cp. Exodus 20:13)

“Do not commit adultery.”  
(Matthew 5:27; cp. Exodus 20:14)

“Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.”  
(Matthew 5:31; cp. Deuteronomy 24:1)

“Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths made to the Lord.”  
(Matthew 5:33; cp. Leviticus 19:12)

“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” (Matthew 5:38; cp. Exodus 21:24)

“Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”  
(Matthew 5:43; cp. Leviticus 19:18)

*“But I tell you that...”*

“Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”  
(Matthew 5:22a)

“Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”  
(Matthew 5:28)

“Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.”  
(Matthew 5:32)

“Do not swear at all...let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and let your ‘no’ be ‘no’.”  
(Matthew 5:34, 36)

“Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also... If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.”  
(Matthew 5:39, 41)

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... .if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”  
(Matthew 5:44, 47)

What dramatic contrasts! People can keep the letter of the law and still break it. Just keeping the law does not necessarily fulfill its purpose or intent. The righteousness of God's kingdom goes beyond keeping rules. It is an inner rightness of the heart. It deals with motives. When asked by a religious expert which was the greatest commandment, Jesus told him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37–40). God gave the Law so that we might love him fully and love our neighbor as ourselves, including our enemies. Love fulfills the intent of the law, for the reason all the commandments were given was that we might please God and treat others as he treats us—and them. This is why Jesus said that those who love like this will be acting as true children of their Father in heaven, for "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). As God's children we are called to be perfect (complete, mature) just as he is (Matthew 5:48). We are to love as God loves.

***Who can love as God loves—perfectly? No one—unless he or she has a new heart!***

But who can love as God loves—perfectly? No one—unless he or she has a new heart! And this is exactly what God has promised, a heart transplant:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26–27)

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

As David did, we too ask the Lord for new hearts and renewed spirits (Psalm 51:10). God does this when we are born again, born of the Spirit from above, when God's Spirit comes to live within us. We become new creations in Christ, and his Spirit lives in us. God is now at work within us both to give us the desire and the ability to do his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). We have new motivation and new ability to please God and walk in his ways, loving him fully and loving others as ourselves, including our enemies who oppose us.

As parents we teach our children to obey, and in so doing we assume three things: First, as our children they belong to our family. Second, as our children they really do want to please us. Third, as our children they really can do what we say even though at times it may appear they choose not to. Children can be taught to obey because they have a familial relationship with us. So it is with God's children. As his children, how then can we nurture our love for him? How do we cultivate a "love of the Father"?

### **Loving God: Habits of the Heart (Matthew 6:1–18)**

*In contrast to religious practitioners who publicize their piety, disciples of Jesus develop habits of the heart without fanfare.*

Jesus assumed his followers would practice at least three spiritual disciplines, or "acts of righteousness" (Matthew 6:1): they would give alms, they would pray, and they would fast (Matthew 6:2–15). And they would do this to please and honor God, not to be seen

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

and praised by people. Such “acts of righteousness” come from a heart that loves him and wants to express this love by giving to those in need, by spending time and talking with God, and by practicing self-discipline that nurtures spiritual life. In contrast to religious practitioners who publicize their piety, disciples of Jesus develop habits of the heart without fanfare. They give to the needy out of a heart of compassion. They pray to their Father in heaven out of a heart of devotion. They fast out of a heart of dedication. They are fostering a love of the Father.

John, a follower of Jesus who walked with him for three years, watched Jesus practice these habits of the heart. He saw Jesus continually help those in need. He frequently observed Jesus praying to his Father. Jesus also fasted. When the disciples asked him why they were unable to cast out a demon from an epileptic boy, Jesus replied after casting out the demon, “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21). Jesus fully loved his Father, not the world. John later wrote instructions to followers of Christ and warned them not to love the world:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man (the lust of the flesh), the lust of his eyes (the lust of the eyes) and the boasting of what he has and does (the pride of life)—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15–17)

Jesus, the last Adam, stood at the very points of temptation where the first Adam fell. The serpent tempted Eve, telling her that if she ate of the tree she would not die but be like God, knowing good and evil.

When the woman saw the fruit of the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), pleasing to the eye (lust of the

eyes), and also desirable for gaining wisdom (pride of life), she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it too. (Genesis 3:6)

Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread (lust of the flesh), to worship Satan in order to be given all the kingdoms of the world, which Satan showed him (lust of the eyes), and to throw himself down from the highest point of the temple to prove he was the Son of God (pride of life). But Jesus refused to give in to these temptations (Matthew 4:1–10). Jesus was tempted in every way we are, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He did not live by bread alone but by every word that came from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). His love of the Father was greater than the love of the world.

The habits of the heart discussed in this section appear to be intentionally designed to help us resist these same temptations. Fasting helps us to say no to the lust of the flesh, the temptation to indulge our physical appetites. Giving alms to the poor assists us in resisting the lust of the eyes, the temptation to covet and to get rather than to give. Praying underscores our constant dependence on God who gives us our daily bread and aids us in resisting the temptation to give in to the pride of life. Learning to give alms, fast, and pray cultivates love of the Father, which replaces love of the world.<sup>7</sup> These spiritual disciplines become means of grace, avenues by which the Holy Spirit changes us and makes us more like Jesus, nurturing the fruit of the Spirit and displacing the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16–23). And all three of these spiritual disciplines seem to be interrelated. As we fast we spend less on buying food and less time in preparing and eating; thus we have more to give to those in need and more time to pray, spending time with our heavenly Father.

*The disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them many things. But their request was that Jesus teach them to pray.*

The disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them many things. But their request was that Jesus teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Prayer is probably one of the most important habits of the heart. And so, at the disciples' request, Jesus taught them to pray what we have come to know as "The Lord's Prayer." However, in reality it is "The Disciples' Prayer." Jesus taught his disciples to pray at least six things. The first three concern God and are strong declarations. The last three concern us and are personal requests:

- Our Father who is in heaven, your name—be honored!
- Your kingdom—come!
- Your will—be done!
- Give us this day our daily bread.
- Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
- Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (Matthew 6:9–13a)

We pray this way because the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to God—forever (Matthew 6:13b). Our deepest desire when we pray is our Father's glory, his rule and his will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, we ask him to provide our daily bread (life's necessities), to forgive us our sins as we forgive others their sins (treating others as he has treated us), and to protect and deliver us from any temptation that the evil one (Satan) would use to cause us to sin. And so we pray each day, at times with fasting, and we are always ready to give to those in need. These are the habits of a heart that nurture love for God, and others.

### **Singleness of Heart: Mastered by the Master (Matthew 6:19–24)**

*Disciples are being mastered by the Master. They are developing a "single eye (heart)." Jesus called it a "good eye (heart)" that, like a lamp, gives light to the whole body.*

Followers of Jesus Christ are people with new hearts, transformed attitudes, and changed motivations; their lives are so different that they are able to make a difference in the world. They are learning to love God with all they are and to love others as they love themselves. They are disciples who are learning to put into practice what their Savior has taught them. They are not storing up temporal treasures on earth, which can be stolen or destroyed; rather, they are learning to lay up eternal treasures in heaven, which cannot be lost or taken away (Matthew 6:19–21). Their hearts and their love are focused on things they have come to value.

Because they have new hearts, their values are radically changing. No longer are they placing significance on what does not last, things such as possessions, property, position, power, prestige, fame, and money. Rather they value what has lasting worth—God’s Word, God’s will, people who have been made in God’s image. They have discovered that they cannot serve, love, and be devoted to two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Since Jesus is their master, they are seeking to serve, love, and be devoted to him, not “mammon,” that is, earthly treasures. A love for this world is being replaced by a love for God (1 John 2:15–17). They are experiencing “the expulsive power of a new affection.”<sup>7</sup> They are being mastered by the master. They are developing a “single eye (heart).” Jesus called it a “good eye (heart)” that, like a lamp, gives light to the whole body. A new light has dawned and is flooding their entire world. The light has come and the darkness is being dispelled. Everything is now seen in a new light, the light of their master—the light of the world.

### **First Things First: Worry-Free Living (Matthew 6:25–34)**

*Disciples of Jesus have their priorities straight. They seek God’s will and way first, and he faithfully provides their “daily bread.”*



Because God has promised to meet all their needs, followers of Jesus Christ are less and less worried about what they will eat, drink and wear. If their heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers in the field, will he not take care of those who through their faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, are his children? (Matthew 6:25–30). Formerly they, like those still in darkness, ran after all these things. They sought to lay up treasures on earth (Matthew 6:32). But they are now children of God and their heavenly Father knows what they need and promises to take care of them. As they seek first his kingdom (his will) and righteousness (his way of doing life), not their own, they are discovering that he faithfully gives them what they need (Matthew 6:33). They are less and less anxious about tomorrow, knowing that each day with all its needs will be taken care of (Matthew 6:34). Their heavenly Father will provide their “daily bread” as they put first things first—God, his will and his way rather than their own. Disciples of Jesus have their priorities straight. Daily their prayer is that God be honored, that his kingdom come, and that his will be done on earth in their world as it is in heaven.

**Reaping and Sowing: Judging and Discerning (Matthew 7:1–6)**

*Followers of Jesus Christ are not judgmental, but they are discerning.*

As those who have been removed from the dominion of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light, followers of Jesus Christ learn to walk as he walked. Since God in his kindness and love saved us—not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy—we should treat others as he has treated us. Since he has forgiven us, we should forgive others. Since he has shown us mercy, we should show mercy. We are not to pronounce judgment on others. If we do, we shall be treated in

like manner (Matthew 7:1, 2). We will reap what we have sown. Judgment is God's prerogative alone. Are we wiser than he? "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

Further, if we take it upon ourselves to determine a person's guilt, we should apply the same basis of judgment to ourselves. If we do, we may discover that "the speck of sawdust" we saw in our brother's eye is rather small compared to the "plank" in our own eye! How hypocritical! We should first clean up our own house before we attempt to clean up someone else's. In fact, having taken care of our own "plank" first, we probably will be able to see more clearly to remove the speck of sawdust from our brother's eye, and do so with greater empathy and compassion (Matthew 7:3-5).

Followers of Jesus Christ are not to be judgmental, but they are to be discerning. They are to learn not to give what is valuable to those who show themselves unworthy. They are not to give what is sacred to dogs, nor are they to give pearls to pigs (Matthew 7:6a). If the good news of the gospel is resisted and rejected, Christ's followers are to "shake off the dust of their feet" and go to those who will receive this priceless message of God's salvation. They are to withdraw their greeting of peace from any home or town where people are inhospitable and refuse to welcome them or listen to their words. Rejection of Christ's messengers is a rejection of the one who sent them, and such rejection brings judgment upon those who resist (Matthew 10:11-15). Disciples of Jesus are to be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. They are to be as discerning as snakes, but as innocent as young pigeons. They are not to judge, but they are to discern "dogs" and "pigs" lest such people not only reject the holy and priceless message, trampling it under their feet, but also turn and persecute them (Matthew 7:6b). Christ's followers are not to judge, for judgment is God's alone. "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord" (Romans 12:19; cp. Deuteronomy 32:35). But they are to discern people of peace.

**God's Good Gifts: Ask, Seek, Knock (Matthew 7:7–11)**

*God does not help those who help themselves. He promises to help those who cannot help themselves.*

Children are dependent. They need help—the help of parents who willingly provide what they need. Disciples of Jesus soon discover they “don’t have what it takes.” They continually need help. They are dependent upon God for daily bread, for forgiveness of their sins, and for protection from the enemy, Satan. They need their heavenly Father to give them the power and strength to obey and live as Jesus calls them to live—to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, to love their neighbors as they love themselves. We are not able to live life on our own. We are not able to supply all our needs. God does not promise to help those who help themselves. He promises to help those who cannot help themselves. He invites us to ask, to seek, and to knock, for in so doing we humbly acknowledge our dependency on him (Matthew 7:7). We learn to put our trust in him, honoring him by believing that he is good and will keep his word to supply all our needs. But we must faithfully ask, seek, and knock because he has promised that everyone who asks receives, and everyone who seeks finds, and to everyone who knocks the door will be opened (Matthew 7:8).

God makes such a comprehensive promise because he is our heavenly Father through faith in his Son, who has become our Lord and Savior. As followers of Christ we are his children, and which father would not give his children what they ask for? “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9–11). We, even in our sinful state, know how to give good gifts to our children and

our heavenly Father far exceeds us in loving his children and providing for them. Even though it may seem that God is slow to answer, we continue to ask, confident that he will respond and give what is best, for he is good (Luke 11:5–10). After all, he has already given us the greatest and best of all gifts, the gift of eternal life through His Son: “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31). Of course he will! These gifts include the wonderful gift of himself, his own Spirit (Luke 11:13) through whom we received life and the power to live a new life, a power to give us the desire and the ability to do the things that please God. Therefore followers of Christ are to ask, seek and knock, and as they do so they will discover that their heavenly Father will graciously supply all their needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

**The Golden Rule: Becoming Like the God We Serve  
(Matthew 7:12)**

*Jesus’ disciples are to love as he loved, for in so doing the intent and purpose of all God’s commandments is fulfilled—loving God fully and loving our neighbor as ourselves.*

Disciples are to treat others as God has treated them, and they are to treat others as they themselves wish to be treated. This is what has been called the Golden Rule, the principle of reciprocity—equal treatment. Do as you would be done by. Most religions have a negative form of this principle: “Don’t do to others what you do not want them to do to you.” This is similar to the principle, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1). Jesus, however, put it positively: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Treating others as we want

them to treat us is another way of saying, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Such love is a summation of the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures) which Jesus came to fulfill. Jesus’ disciples are to love as he loved, for in so doing the intent and purpose of all God’s commandments is fulfilled—that we would love God fully and love our neighbor as ourselves. And who are our neighbors? They are not only those who are nearby. Our neighbors are also those we meet who are in need, even people who are not like us, or who may not like us (Luke 10:25–37). The Golden Rule is how we are to treat everyone, doing to them as we would have them do to us. Followers of Jesus Christ are learning to live as he lived.

Disciples of Jesus are being transformed, day by day, by a new way of thinking—God’s way (Romans 12:2–3). As they follow Christ, devoted fully to him, they become more like him (Romans 8:29). People become like the “god” they serve (Psalm 115:8). God’s ancient people, Israel, constantly struggled as to what “god” they would serve—the true and living God, or the gods of the surrounding nations. The gods of the nations were made of silver and gold. They had mouths but could not speak, eyes but could not see, ears but could not hear, noses but could not smell, hands but could not feel, and feet but could not walk. Tragically God’s people increasingly rejected the ways of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless” (2 Kings 17:15). The true and living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is love. He demonstrated his love by sending his one and only Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Since God so loved us we are to so love others, loving them as we love ourselves, in everything doing to others what we would have them do to us. This is what fulfills the reason and purpose of God’s law (Galatians 5:14).

## Two Doors and Two Roads (Matthew 7:13–14)

*There is only one way to God—Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

All of us have a choice to make. We must decide which door we will enter. There are only two doors: the narrow door and the wide door. The small door opens to the narrow road that leads to life. The wide door opens to the broad road that leads to destruction. Disciples of Jesus have chosen the first option, the door that leads to life. Although fewer find this door and walk this path, it leads to true and abundant living. Jesus himself is the door and whoever enters through him will be saved (John 10:9, 10). He is not only the door, he is also the way and the truth that lead to life. In fact, no one can come to the Father except through him (John 14:6). Some think this is narrow-minded. However, the offer to choose the way that leads to life is anything but exclusive; it is inclusive. It is open to all.<sup>8</sup>

If there are many ways to God, why would he send Jesus to become one more way, and why the way of the cross? It is because there are no other ways to God that he sent his only Son so that all who believe in him would not die but would have everlasting life (John 3:16). Since God's way is based on what he has done and not on what we have done, it is a way that is open to everyone. It is based on believing, trusting in him. God's way levels the playing field, for whosoever will may come. Salvation that comes through faith in what God has done in Christ is available to all, for Christ died for all and God wants all to be saved and come to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:3–6). This "narrow door" of salvation is open to all: young and old, male and female, rich and poor, religious or nonreligious. There is no respect of persons, no preferential treatment. Everyone comes the same way—through Christ. If this were not so, then God would be showing favoritism to followers of Christ who have been made right with God based on faith, not

based on what they have done. All other “ways” are based on human effort: Hindus must have good karma, Buddhists must follow the eightfold path, Muslims must faithfully practice the five pillars of Islam, adherents of folk religions must follow the requirements of their “gods.” And then there is no assurance of acceptance by God since approval is based on what they have done. They can only hope that their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds. And then, how will their deeds be “measured” and “weighed”?

Clearly, if there were many ways to God and only one requires faith in Christ, God would be playing favorites. But if there is only one way to God, then all must come the same way. “It is by grace you are saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). There may be many ways people come to hear about Christ, but there is only one way to God—Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He alone is the door through whom we are saved (John 10:9). There are other ways that appear right, but they lead to death (Proverbs 16:25). Only the narrow way, God’s way, leads to life. There are only two doors, only two ways—God’s way of salvation by faith through Christ the door, or man’s way through human effort. We have a choice to make. Which door will we enter? Which road will we take? Whose way will we trust: ours or God’s? Disciples of Jesus have put their full trust in God’s way—Jesus Christ, his Son, their Lord and Savior.

### **Good and Bad Fruit (Matthew 7:15–23)**

*If Jesus is Lord, we are not. Therefore, we will do what he wants, not what we want. We will live like he lived, doing the will of the Father.*

There are only two doors: one leads to life, the other to destruction. Only a few find the road that leads to life, but

many enter the wide gate and travel the broad road that leads to ruin. It seems logical that more would choose the way of life than the way of death, so there must be something that keeps people from making the right choice, and there is—false prophets! They come in sheep’s clothing, but they are really inwardly ferocious wolves (Matthew 7:15). They are deceivers who lead people down the wrong path. As wolves they steal, kill and destroy sheep. Although they disguise themselves, we can recognize these counterfeit prophets and teachers by their “fruit” (Matthew 7:16a), the things that are produced in and through their lives. It is not possible to pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles. Likewise, good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees produce bad fruit. Trees that do not bear good fruit are cut down and thrown into the fire (Matthew 7:16b–20). Phony prophets and false teachers can be spotted by the fruit of their lives—lust, evil desires, self-indulgence, greed, covetousness, self-importance, pride—the love of the world rather than the love of the Father. They do not practice what they preach. Their claims do not match their conduct. Their character does not reflect their confession. They look like sheep, but they do not act like sheep.

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of the Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). On judgment day many on the broad way will say that they called on the name of the Lord and did many miracles in his name. But Jesus will say that he never knew them and they will be sent away from him (Matthew 7:22–23). The proof of truth is good fruit—doing the will of the heavenly Father, not their own. The evidence that we are genuine followers of Jesus is that we live as he lived, walk as he walked and do the will of the Father. Character matches confession. If Jesus is Lord, we are not. Therefore, we will do what he wants, not what we want. We will continue in his word and live as true followers of Christ. Knowing the truth is matched by doing the truth.



**Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24–27)**

*True disciples are doers of the Word, not hearers only. They respond in faith and obedience. Knowing the truth is matched by doing the truth.*

This section of Matthew tells us that true disciples are doers of the Word, not hearers only (Matthew 7:23). They respond in faith and obedience. Jesus said that everyone who hears his words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. When the rains pour down, the streams rise, and the winds blow, the house stands firm. It is built on the solid foundation of God's word (Matthew 7:24–25). Heaven and earth will pass away, but his words will never pass away (Matthew 24:35). They are eternal.

However, anyone who does not put his words into practice is like a foolish person who builds his house, his life, on sand. When life's challenges rain down, and the streams of adversity rise, and the ill-winds of hard times blow, the house will come crashing down and be destroyed (Matthew 7:27). To believe in Jesus is to believe in the One who has sent him. If we call Jesus "Lord", we will give heed to what he says. If we love him we will do as he commands (John 14:15). We will continue in his Word. We will come to know the truth that sets us free to live for him and that sets us free to love others as we love ourselves.

Through Jesus the penalty of sin has been annulled and its power has been broken. No longer slaves of sin, we become slaves of righteousness, for whom the Son sets free is truly free indeed! (John 8:34). Life in God's kingdom can only be based and built on the King, Jesus Christ, God's Son. He alone is the solid rock of salvation.

## Conclusion (Matthew 7:28–29)

*We become more and more like those with whom we live, reflecting their attitudes, their motives, their priorities, their lifestyle. As we hear and do what Christ taught and commanded, we become more like him.*

When Jesus finished teaching, the crowds were amazed at what they heard (Matthew 7:28). In contrast to their teachers of the law, Jesus taught as one who had authority—divine authority. His words carried weight, as the very words of God himself. His teaching was not his own but came from his Father. Therefore, his words required response. Jesus declared, “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17). The choice is ours. If we want to do God’s will it will be clear that the teaching of Jesus is from God, for it has the power to transform us. It will change our attitudes. It will transform our motivations, and rearrange our priorities. Hearing and doing what Christ taught and commanded makes us more like him. As devoted followers we learn to walk as he walked, talk as he talked, and live as he lived. We become conformed to his image, for this is what our heavenly Father wants of his children who love him and are called according to his purpose. In everything he is working for our good so that we might become more and more like Jesus (Romans 8:28–29). Genuine Christians, true Christ-followers, bear much fruit and show themselves to be his disciples, bringing honor to their Father in heaven (John 15:8).

Jesus chose and called his disciples, first of all, to “be with him.” Discipleship is relational.<sup>9</sup> Imagine living for several years with the Savior of the world! What an amazing journey it would be to walk the dusty paths of Palestine with Jesus, the rabbi. Eventually “the dust of the rabbi” would “cling” to

you. You would begin to walk and talk as he did. This is why the religious leaders were amazed at those early disciples who, although they were “unschooled, ordinary men,” spoke with bold authority—just as Jesus did (Acts 4:13).

Given enough time, we become more and more like those with whom we live, reflecting their attitudes, their motives, their priorities, and their lifestyle. Although only the first generation of disciples had the privilege of living with Christ personally, subsequent disciples, such as the apostle Paul, could say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). The author of Hebrews wrote: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:7–8). We are called to keep our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1–2). The call to follow Jesus and continue in his Word, hearing and doing what he commands, is for all who call him Lord. The call to discipleship is for every believer in every generation, a call to walk in the ways of the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

**Part TWO:**  
Multiplying  
Disciples

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

## Part Two - Multiplying Disciples: The Witness of the Apostles

*The disciples were sent out to make disciples of others. If discipleship ended with the first generation of disciples the command to make disciples of all nations would be impossible to fulfill.*

The call to those who commit their lives to Jesus Christ is a call not only to be with him, but also to go for him. This two-fold call is evident in Jesus' selection of the twelve apostles: "He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mark 3:14, 15). His call was to follow him and to be sent as his witnesses. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). The disciples learned to be fishers of men like Jesus. Initially they learned by watching Jesus. They were with him as he began to preach the good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind and release for those oppressed (Luke 4:18–19). They saw him proclaim forgiveness to adulteresses and tax-collectors, heal cripples and lepers, set free demon-possessed men and women, raise children and adults from the dead. They were amazed when people accepted Jesus' call to forsake all and follow him, which is what they themselves had done.

Eventually the day came when Jesus sent out his disciples as his emissaries, two by two. At first just the original twelve, and then at least seventy-two more were appointed and also sent out two by two. "He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few'" (Luke 10:2a; Matthew 9:37). In light

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of such an abundance of people to be reached, Jesus challenged the twelve disciples and then the group of seventy-two to “ask the Lord of the harvest ... to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:3). Those he called to pray for laborers also became harvesters, for prayer prepares the heart to respond to the call of the Lord of the harvest. Followers now are to go out and make more followers of Jesus.

The disciples were sent out to make disciples of others. If discipleship ended with the first generation of disciples, the command to make disciples of all nations would be impossible to fulfill. Disciples were to be made around the world as the original generation of disciples began to disciple others.

## Chapter 2

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### **Discipleship 2.0: The Mission and Ministry - His Witnesses** *(Matthew 10)*

*The earliest disciples were not particularly polished, well-educated, or fluent communicators. But Jesus knew they had ears to hear and hearts to obey.*

**A**s Jesus prepared to send out his disciples he gave them clear instructions about what they were to do and how they were to respond.

We now come to the second of the five major teaching sections in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 10.

At least eight things are found in this sending segment of the teaching of Jesus:



### *Making and Multiplying Disciples*

- The Messengers (10:1–4)
- The Mission (10:5–8)
- The Message and Ministry (10:7–8)
- The Manner (10:9–10)
- The Receptive (10:11–13)
- The Resistant (10:14–16)
- The Response (10:17–39)
- The Reward (10:40–42)

### **The Messengers (Matthew 10:1–4)**

The disciples of Jesus are his sheep. Having heard his voice, they followed (John 10:27). They had heard him say, “Come to me.” But the time came for them to hear him say, “Go for me.” They were now to go as his representatives. So he sent them with his authority. “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1). The twelve to whom Jesus gave authority made up a rather motley group of ordinary men—fishermen, common laborers, and even a tax collector and a political activist. These men were not particularly polished, well educated, or fluent communicators. In fact, they left much to be desired when it came to being ambassadors of the one who was sending them. At times they could be insensitive, doubting, competitive and proud. It could even appear that Jesus sent them out somewhat prematurely.

But Jesus knew they had ears to hear and hearts to obey. They were committed followers who were learning to continue in his word and now his word included going in his name as his witnesses. They may not yet have experienced the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, but they were willing and ready to reach others with the good news of the kingdom of God. They had received his teaching, they were given his authority and they had his full backing.

### **The Mission (Matthew 10:5–6)**

Jesus told the disciples to pray for workers, for he saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd. He gave the disciples specific directions as to where to go and not to go. Initially they were to go to the “lost sheep of Israel.” They were not to go to “foreigners” such as the Gentiles (distant nations) or the Samaritans (nearby nations) with whom they had little contact. They were to go to their neighbors, their fellow countrymen, the neighboring towns, to people like them. They were Jewish and they were to go to Jews, to people who had lost their way and were like harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd. The disciples too must go just like Jesus. So they began seeking the lost in the towns of Galilee, and as they went, Jesus told them what they were to say and do.

### **The Message and Ministry (Matthew 10:7–8)**

Jesus gave clear instructions about what his disciples were to communicate and demonstrate. “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’” (Matthew 10:7). Although Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom comes later in the third section of his sayings (Matthew 13), it is clear that Jesus had taught the disciples about the kingdom of heaven (Mark 4) prior to sending them out (Mark 6). Jesus never specifically defined the kingdom of heaven, but he explained and described it with parables. Using everyday illustrations and stories, he compared the kingdom of heaven to such common experiences as fishing, farming, shepherding, baking bread, attending wedding celebrations, going to banquets, managing money, and helping people in need (Matthew 13:1–52; 25:1–30; Mark 4:1–29; Luke 10:25–37; 16:1–13; 19:11–27, etc.).

Such analogies describe the nature of the kingdom Jesus was announcing. It was God’s kingdom, not man’s. It was the good news of God’s salvation from sin’s curse and power. It was

the good news of deliverance from Satan's rule and domination. It was the good news of freedom from bondage and oppression. It was the good news of release from sickness and suffering. It was the good news that God's kingdom rule had come in the person of his Son, Jesus the Messiah. He had come to redeem and set people free and enable them to live to the "praise of his glory" both now in this fallen world and in the eternal age to come.

Not only did Jesus preach this good news, he also demonstrated it. He spoke with authority. He forgave sin (Matthew 9:1–8). He healed the sick (Matthew 8:14–17). He raised the dead (Matthew 9:18–26). He cast out demons (Matthew 12:28). God's king had come, proclaiming and displaying the good news that his rule had invaded our world, dethroned Satan, the god of this age, released people from the power of evil, and freed them to live as he originally intended—in relationship and fellowship with him.

What Jesus preached and did, the twelve disciples were instructed to do likewise. "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7–8). They were to be faithful stewards of what they had so freely received—life!

### **The Manner (Matthew 10:9–10)**

Christ's disciples were to travel light. They were to take no money or extra clothes. They were to be supplied and supported by those to whom they went, "for the worker is worth his keep" (Matthew 10:10). Middle Eastern hospitality was to characterize their journeys. The welcoming of these traveling emissaries by gracious hosts would be a sign of openness and receptivity to their message.

### **The Receptive (Matthew 10:11–13)**

Jesus gave his disciples clear instructions: “Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave” (Matthew 10:11). Luke identifies such a worthy person as “a man of peace” (Luke 10:6). The typical greeting of peace (shalom) would be either received or rejected. If it was received the disciples were to remain with these people, for through them many more would hear the good news of the kingdom. Like the woman at the well (John 4:39–42) and Matthew himself (Matthew 9:9–13), many of their acquaintances would hear the message and become followers of Christ. Receptivity by people of peace to Jesus’ messengers and message was in reality a receiving of the one who sent them.

### **The Resistant (Matthew 10:14–16)**

Jesus warned his disciples that not all would receive them and their message. Their experience would be much like his. Some would be open and receptive. Others would not: “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town” (Matthew 10:14). Such rejection of them and their message was a rejection of Jesus himself. And judgment awaited such a home or town. The disciples were sent out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, they were to be as shrewd (discerning, perceptive) as snakes and as innocent (harmless, pure in motive) as doves (Matthew 10:16).

### **The Response (Matthew 10:17–39)**

These verses record Jesus’ conversation with the disciples regarding rejection and persecution. The disciples were to watch out for those who would persecute them, arrest, flog and oppose them, but they were not to be afraid of them. The

Spirit of their heavenly Father would give them what they were to say. Even family members may turn against them. When brought before governors and kings because of their testimony for Jesus, the disciples were to be his witnesses to them and the nations. Yes, persecution, and even death, could await Christ's followers.

But they were not to be afraid of those who could kill only the body but could not kill the soul. Rather they were to fear the Lord, who has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell. Jesus told them: "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end, acknowledging me and not disowning me before men, will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). To follow Christ could cost them their lives. However, Jesus made it very clear that those who lost their lives for his sake would find them again (Matthew 10:39).

### **The Reward (Matthew 10:40–42)**

Faithful disciples who bear witness to their Master will be rewarded, as will all who receive them and their message. "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me ... and if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple ... he will certainly not lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40, 42). To lose this transitory human life for Christ's sake and the gospel is to find true life, eternal life.

The words of Jim Elliot, missionary martyr of the last century, are pointed: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."<sup>10</sup> The apostle Paul, a first century martyr, said it in these words: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Though Paul gave up his life for Christ's sake, he knew that to depart and be with Christ was better by far (Philippians 1:23).

## Conclusion

*Becoming and making disciples of Jesus Christ is serious business. To know Christ and make him known is costly. Becoming his disciples requires us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus—to lay down our life that others may live.*

Becoming and making disciples of Jesus Christ is serious business. To know Christ and make him known is costly. To be his disciple requires us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus—to lay down our life that others may live. Jesus himself said:

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves (hangs onto) his life will lose it, while the person who hates (gives up) his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (John 12:24–26)

If Jesus is truly Lord, we have died to having our way to live God's way. Our "kernel of wheat" has fallen to the ground and died. In baptism we confessed that "Jesus is Lord" and acknowledged with the apostle Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ and no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). In our dying we live; in our living we decrease and Christ increases. The seed of his life grows within us and multiplies through us as we make disciples among all nations, beginning in our Jerusalem even to the ends of the earth.

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

## Chapter 3

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### **Discipleship 3.0: The Message and Meaning - His Kingdom *(Matthew 13)***

*What kind of a kingdom did Jesus bring? God's kingdom had come, but not according to popular expectations.*

“**T**he kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 10:7). This is the message the twelve and the seventy-two disciples were sent to preach to the lost sheep of Israel. How much did they understand of what they were preaching? Apparently they understood, as Jesus had taught them, that the casting out of demons was a sign of God's kingdom (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:30). The strongman, Satan, had been bound and his kingdom was being plundered. But was there something more? When the seventy-two returned joyfully announcing that they had cast out demons in his name, Jesus had to correct their understanding. He told them:



“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Yes, the kingdom of heaven is near, but there is a greater reality—eternal life and a relationship with God. Even John the Baptist, who identified and introduced Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry, had questions about his ministry after he was imprisoned by Herod. John sent some of his followers to find out if he was, indeed, the messiah or if they should keep looking (Matthew 11:2, 3; cp. Isaiah 35:5, 6). In his reply Jesus alluded to a messianic passage in Isaiah: “Go back and report to John what you hear and see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me” (Matthew 11:4–6).

The kingdom had come, but John was still in prison. Herod was still king. God’s kingdom had not replaced Rome’s rule. What kind of a kingdom did Jesus bring? God’s kingdom apparently was present, but perhaps not according to popular expectations. The kingdom of God was something more than or other than the kingdom of Israel. Could it be the kingdom was here, but not completely? Could it be that the kingdom was now present, but would come more fully in the future? Clearly, the disciples’ understanding of the kingdom needed to change, and change it did!

Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing the sick people he encountered. So, of course, people spread the news about this traveling miracle-worker (Matthew 4:23). People from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea followed Jesus, listening to his teaching and watching him heal the sick. But in some communities the response was not as enthusiastic. Such was the case in Jesus’ hometown. One Sabbath Jesus was invited to speak at the synagogue in Nazareth:

The scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he said to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:17–21)

Initially, the people were amazed at the gracious words of this home town boy. But when Jesus said that no prophet is accepted in his home town, they became angry. And when he spoke about prophets of old such as Elijah and Elisha, whose ministry and message were more readily accepted by so-called “outsiders,” they became furious (Luke 4:23–30). Why was “the year of the Lord’s favor” received so unfavorably in Nazareth? Was it because the kingdom Jesus proclaimed was not the kingdom the people were expecting?

## Parables of the Kingdom of God

*“Why do you speak to the people in parables?” Jesus replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.”*

When the crowds flocked to hear Jesus, they found that he constantly spoke to them about the kingdom in parables. But when he was with his own disciples, he explained everything (Mark 4:34). The third major teaching section in Matthew (chapter 13) contains an extensive summary of what Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of God. It consists of seven parables that describe the presence and nature of the kingdom Jesus proclaimed:

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- The Parable of the Four Soils: Response to the Kingdom (13:3–23)
- The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds: True and False Sons of the Kingdom (13:24–32, 36–43)
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Growth of the Kingdom (13:31–32)
- The Parable of the Leaven: Impact of the Kingdom (13:33–35)
- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure: Cost of the Kingdom (13:44)
- The Parable of the Pearl: Value of the Kingdom (13:45)
- The Parable of the Fishing Net: Separation of the Kingdom (13:47–50)
- Conclusion: Do you understand, new and old treasures? (13:51–52)

**The Parable of the Four Soils: Response to the Kingdom  
(Matthew 13:3–23)**

*“Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?”*

A parable (literally, “to cast alongside”) is a comparison, an analogy. Jesus used parables to communicate the nature of the kingdom of God by telling stories or using illustrations drawn from everyday life. The parable of a farmer sowing seed would be familiar to most everyone in a rural society like Galilee. Though not always the case, normally the seed would be scattered on an unplowed field. The seed fell on various kinds of soil—hard, stony, thorny, and good—so the result was very different. The seed that fell on the hardened path never even took root. The seed that fell on rocky soil grew quickly but wilted in the hot sun because of a lack of roots. Still other

seed grew but was choked out by thorns. But the seed that fell on good soil produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Why did Jesus use such a parable to illustrate the kingdom? This was the question the disciples asked. And his answer was surprising if not confusing: “The secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you, but not to them [the crowds]. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Matthew 13:11). Then, quoting Isaiah 6:9–10, Jesus explained why this was so:

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will ever be hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” (Matthew 13:14–15)

Jesus then explained the parable to his disciples because they had eyes to see and ears to hear. Like the different kinds of soil, people respond to the message of the kingdom (the seed) differently. Due to the condition of their hearts some understand nothing. Others receive the message joyfully, but when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they fall away. With others the message is choked out by the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. Only the good soil produces a crop that multiplies, for they have ears to hear. The Gospel of Luke describes the good soil in the following way: “But the seed on good ground stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” (Luke 8:15).

Mark’s account adds this comment from Jesus, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any

parable?” (Mark 4:13). The parable of the four soils is really a parable about hearing, which is the key to understanding all parables: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Mark 4:23–25). The openness or willingness to hear and do what God wants is the key to understanding the “secrets” of His kingdom. To those who have ears to hear, the “mysteries” of the kingdom are “open secrets” and are available to all who will listen and obey, namely, disciples—followers of Christ who are hearing his words and putting them into practice.

### **The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds: True and False Sons of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43)**

Using another farming analogy, Jesus told the crowds about a farmer who sowed seed in his field. But while everyone slept an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When sown, even a weed can initially look like wheat; but as it grows it is eventually recognized as a weed—counterfeit wheat. When asked by his servants about pulling up the weeds, the owner of the field told them to wait until harvest time. Then the servants could separate them, store the wheat and destroy the weeds (Matthew 13:29–30). Later, when the crowd was gone, Jesus explained the meaning of the parable to his disciples:

He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:37–43)<sup>11</sup>

In the previous parable of the soils it is the “evil one” who snatches away what was sown in the hearts of those who do not understand. And in this parable it is again the “evil one” who fights against and opposes the kingdom of God. The coming of God’s rule in Christ created a hostile reaction by the “evil one.” Jesus boldly declared to those who opposed him that when he drove out demons, he did so by the power of the Spirit of God and not by the power of Beelzebub, prince of demons. Such casting out of demons clearly demonstrated that God’s kingdom had arrived among them: “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?” (Matthew 12:28–29). Those who had ears to hear came to understand that the arrival of God’s kingdom in Jesus brought a new level of spiritual conflict and introduced the beginning of the overthrow of the devil’s rule and authority in the world. And although the citizens of these two kingdoms lived side by side, an ultimate separation was coming at the end of the age when the righteous would be rewarded and evil punished.

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Growth of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:31, 32)**

In Matthew the parable of the mustard seed is called a parable of the “kingdom of heaven,” but in Mark it is described as a parable of the “kingdom of God” (Mark 4:30–31). It is apparent that “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are two ways of describing the same reality (Matthew 19:23–24). There is only one kingdom, God’s, whether described as the “kingdom of heaven” or the “kingdom of God.” And this kingdom is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field: “Though it is the smallest

of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and perch in its branches” (Matthew 13:32). The contrast between the beginning and the end of the kingdom is dramatic. Though initially small and seemingly insignificant like a mustard seed, it will grow extremely large, eventually becoming a tree. We do not have Jesus’ explanation of this parable to his disciples, but the point is clear. Size does not reflect significance. What is currently seen does not necessarily indicate what shall be. Twelve disciples from Galilee who were viewed as ignorant and unlearned following an untrained rabbi from Nazareth could be misunderstood as a trivial movement of no consequence. But we should be careful not to despise the day of small, seemingly inconsequential beginnings, for such mustard seed-size beginnings can have large endings. So it is with the kingdom of God.

### **The Parable of the Leaven: Impact of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:33)**

Another kingdom parable is the parable of the leaven, or yeast. The amount of leaven used in baking is small but significant; one small lump can leaven a whole loaf of bread. In this parable Jesus indicated that the leaven, like the mustard seed, has small beginnings but large endings. But in the case of the leaven, it permeates the entire loaf. It is pervasive and all-encompassing. No part of the dough is untouched, unleavened. All is impacted by the leaven. So it will be with the kingdom of God.

### **The Parable of the Hidden Treasure: Cost of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:44)**

In using parables to explain the kingdom of God, Jesus fulfilled what was spoken by the psalmist: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old” (Psalm 78:2). That which had been hidden was now being revealed to those with ears to hear. Jesus told his followers that they were blessed because

many godly people before them had longed to see and hear the things they were experiencing (Matthew 13:17). The parable of the hidden treasure points to the surpassing value of the kingdom. It is like a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field and sells everything he owns to buy the field and make the treasure his.

Clearly, Jesus did not intend to teach that the kingdom of God should be hidden and purchased. A parable is not an allegory, for a parable, in contrast to an allegory, usually does not have meaning attached to every detail. Rather, it has a primary point with the details underscoring the main truth. And the point in this parable is that discipleship is costly—the man sold all he had to obtain the treasure. To follow Christ requires total commitment: “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Christ’s total giving of himself requires a similar response on the part of his disciples. Such grace is costly. The words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are to the point:

It is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life...Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘you were bought with a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Parable of the Pearl: Value of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:45)**

Similar to the parable of the treasure, the parable of the pearl involves the selling of everything to purchase something of great value. In the previous parable the value of the treasure is implied. But in this parable the pearl is clearly identified as of “great value.” Nothing is more valuable than the kingdom of God. It is priceless. It is worth more than anything else.



Therefore, seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness is of highest priority (Matthew 6:33). In contrast to Christ's disciples, the rich young ruler put greater value on his riches than on God's kingdom. But anyone who has left all to follow Christ will receive a hundred times as much and inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29). The kingdom of heaven is of eternal value.

### **The Parable of the Fishing Net: Separation of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:47–50)**

The parable of the fishing net is similar to the parable of the weeds and wheat. Both illustrate the mixture of the good and bad and the ultimate separation at the end of the age. But Matthew did not record any explanation of this parable to the disciples. Thus, there is no indication of the devil's activity, as is the case with the sowing of weeds among the wheat. Again, as with the parable of the wheat and the weeds, the separation of the good fish from the bad fish is done by angels at the end of this age. But nothing is said as to the destination of the righteous, which is assumed to be "the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). Apparently, the focus is on the wicked and their being thrown into the fiery furnace, the same end that was described for the weeds (Matthew 13:50; cp. 13:42).

Receiving or rejecting the message of the kingdom of God in this age is an eternal decision. It is a decision of greatest consequence. It will determine a person's destination into either the eternal kingdom of God or the fiery furnace, for to accept or refuse the message of the kingdom is to accept or reject both the messenger and the one who has sent him. Although Jesus never explicitly defined the kingdom of God, he consistently described it in parables and demonstrated it through miracles of healing and exorcism. It is the sovereign rule of God in his Son, through whom salvation comes to humankind—forgiveness of sin, deliverance from Satan's power, and eternal life. When his kingdom comes, his will is done on earth as it is

in heaven. His salvation comes today and it will come fully and finally when Jesus returns.

### Conclusion: Old and New Treasures

*“Have you understood all these things? . . . Every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”*

Jesus concluded his teaching of the parables of the kingdom with a pointed question to his disciples: “Have you understood all these things?” (Matthew 13:51). Although they said they understood all the things Jesus had taught about the kingdom, subsequent reactions to his teaching and ministry indicated they had not. Full understanding came gradually. Peter, on behalf of the twelve disciples, confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Jesus indicated that confession came by revelation from the Father (Matthew 16:13–20). But when Jesus began to tell his disciples that he would suffer, die, and be raised again, the disciples did not understand. Even up to his death the disciples did not fully comprehend “all these things.” It was only after they encountered the resurrected Christ and received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they understood Jesus’ teaching about his substitutionary death. Their master had not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He did not come to replace the rule of the Romans, but to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He did not come to call those who claimed to be righteous, but to call to repentance sinners who knew they were not righteous (Luke 5:32). Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to announce the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18–19).

“Therefore every teacher of the law who has been

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instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storehouse new treasures as well as old” (Matthew 13:52). With these words Jesus ended this series of parables. He had come to initiate a new covenant by his death, fulfilling the old covenant. In him the intent and purpose of the law was fulfilled—to love God fully and others as oneself. He who knew no sin became the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. But the old wineskins of legalistic religious practice could not contain the new wine of God’s redemptive grace. Thus a new community was begun of followers of the one who is the way the truth and the life—disciples of the living Christ, who is Lord and into whose kingdom they had come through new birth by the Spirit of God.

## Chapter 4

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### **Discipleship 4.0: The Community of the King - His People *(Matthew 18)***

*Knowing Jesus is personal, but it is not private. Just as we were born into this world as an individual, we were also born into a family. So it is with the kingdom of God, into which we have been born again as an individual, but also born into a family, His family.*

**E**ach of us was born into this world as an individual; so it is with new birth. Relationship with Jesus is personal. Through repentance and faith he becomes my Lord, my Savior. Yes, knowing Jesus is very personal, but it is not private. Just as we were born into this world as an individual, we were also born into a family. So it is with new birth. We are born into God's kingdom as an individual, but we are also born into a family, his family. God is not only our Father, but also the

Father of all who have been born again. We become members of the community of the King, his Son.

## **Life Together in God's Family**

*Children grow best in a family where they learn to trust and obey, to give and forgive.*

The fourth teaching section of Matthew's gospel in chapter 18 is focused on what it means to live together in the community where Jesus is king. Two major subjects are discussed, both concluding with a pointed parable. Jesus expanded and further explained two vital characteristics of those who are citizens of his kingdom; these characteristics were introduced in Matthew's first teaching section, the Sermon on the Mount.

- Greatness in the Kingdom: Little Children and Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:1–14; see Matthew 5:3)
- Forgiveness in the Kingdom: Tough Love and Tender Mercy (Matthew 18:15–35; see Matthew 6:12, 14–15).

### **Greatness in the Kingdom: Little Children and Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:1–14)**

*Happy are the humble, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

On at least three occasions, the question about who was greatest in the kingdom came up (Matthew 18:1–5; Mark 10:35–45; Luke 22:24–30). As Jesus made it clearer and clearer that he was going to be put to death and rise the third day, the disciples were uncertain about their future. They wondered if they also would be put to death. They were unsure of what would happen

to the kingdom. If it did survive what would be their place, if any, in this coming kingdom?

In the instance recorded by Matthew it was the disciples who brought up the question, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’” (Matthew 18:1). In response Jesus called a little child and had him stand among the disciples. He told them that they must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is those who humble themselves like a little child who are great in God’s kingdom (Matthew 18:3–4).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that the kingdom belongs to those who are poor in spirit, to those who humbly admit their utter dependence and need for help (Matthew 5:3). Entering the kingdom requires that people change, turn around, repent and become childlike—not childish, but trusting, like little children. Jesus further surprised his disciples when he said, “Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:5–6). Jesus warned his disciples not to look down on, despise, disrespect, or have a condescending attitude toward one of these childlike believers, because their angelic protectors will report to God about such an attitude which will invite his judgment (Matthew 18:10). Strong words! Jesus then told his disciples the parable of the lost sheep:

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost (Matthew 18:12–14).

The shepherd's great compassion and commitment to seek and save one lost sheep is clearly seen in his great joy in finding it, a joy that transcends even the joy he has for the sheep that did not wander off (see Luke 15:3–7).

Greatness in the kingdom of heaven is to be humble like one of these “little ones.” It is to be like Jesus himself, “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). It was at the Last Supper, on the eve of his death, when the disciples were arguing again among themselves who was greatest (Luke 22:24–30), that Jesus washed their feet, leaving them an example to follow (John 13:3–17). He who was without doubt “greatest” came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a payment for many (Mark 10:45). His kingdom is the kingdom of the greatest. The community of this King is like no other. It is a family of humble, childlike servants who love each other as they have been loved by their King. And by such mutual self-giving love everyone knows they are truly his disciples (John 13:34–35). Greatness is being like Jesus, a humble servant of all.

### **Forgiveness in the Kingdom: Tough Love and Tender Mercy (Matthew 18:15–35)**

*Life together in the family of God is not perfect. Although all have been born anew, his children are not sinless, though they do sin less. They can and do sin against each other.*

Life together in the family of God is not perfect. Although all have been born anew, his children are not sinless, though they do sin less (1 John 1:8–2:2). They can and do sin against each other. If a brother or sister sins against you, what are you to do? Jesus gave three steps to bring reconciliation. First, go and speak to (reprove) the person, just between the two of you. If the person listens to you (responds properly, repents), you will

have gained (won over) your brother or sister. Second, if the person will not listen, then take one or two others along so that everything can be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Leviticus 19:17–18; Deuteronomy 19:15). Third, if the person refuses to listen to them, then tell it to the church, the assembly of believers.<sup>14</sup> If he still refuses to listen even to the church, treat him or her as you would a pagan or a tax collector, that is, an “outsider”. The stubborn, unrepentant brother or sister is to be cut off from fellowship, not put out of the family, but rather disciplined by the family. The person is to be avoided, not rejected. The purpose of such “shunning” is redemptive, to bring about repentance and restoration (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15). It is not punitive, to judge and condemn.

In such a case, whatever you bind, tie up, or refuse to release on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose, untie, or release on earth will be loosed in heaven. Forgiveness is released upon repentance. It is withheld when there is no repentance. Jesus stated: “Again I tell you that if even just two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19–20). Although this promise may be applied to prayer, it is specifically given to the community of disciples called to discipline a sinning brother or sister.<sup>15</sup> Their authority to bind or loose is in the name of Christ, for he is present when his disciples come together, even just two or three, for the community of the king is where he is “all and in all” (Colossians 3:11).

But if a brother or sister continues to sin against us and may even repent, how many times do they have to be forgiven? Would up to seven times be sufficient? Peter asked that question. Jesus answered: “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:22).<sup>16</sup> That seems impossible! Jesus then explained with a parable (Matthew 18:23–34). The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle financial accounts



with his servants. One servant owed the king more than several million dollars and was unable to pay his debt. He was ordered to sell all he had, including his wife and children, to repay the debt. This servant fell on his knees and pleaded with the king to be patient with him and give him more time to pay back everything he owed. The king took pity on him, canceled his entire debt, and let him go. But that same servant went out and found one of his fellow workers who owed him several dollars, grabbed him and began to choke him, demanding that he pay back all he owed. His fellow worker did the same thing that he had done with the king; he begged for time to repay what he owed. But the servant refused and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. The other servants saw what happened and they told the king. The king was angry with the servant whom he had forgiven because he had not forgiven his fellow servant. The king turned him over to the jailers and sentenced him to imprisonment until he paid back all he owed (Matthew 18:23–34). Jesus concluded, “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from the heart” (Matthew 18:35).

The point is clear. Those who have been forgiven must be forgiving. Forgiveness is not a matter of keeping score, but a matter of refusing to do so. It is a matter of the heart, not the head. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts for we have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). God has forgiven us a debt that could never have been paid, the debt of sin. If he has done so for us, we should forgive those who sin against us—those whose debt is infinitely smaller in comparison. At the end of the “Lord’s Prayer” Jesus explained: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14–15). Forgiveness is a big deal; it cost Jesus his life. Through his death we have been forgiven and given eternal life. Through his life we have been made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, adopted into the

Father's family, the community of the king, a community of the forgiven and the forgiving. In light of all this, should we not treat others as God has treated us?<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

*The family of God is where we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:18). It is a community of the king where his followers learn to trust and obey, to give and forgive as he has.*

Jesus' call to his disciples was personal. But following him was in community. Children grow best in families, taking on the characteristics of their parents. Listen to words of Peter as he writes to the family of believers in Turkey:

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear... Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble (1 Peter 1:14–17; 3:8).

The family of God is where we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:18). It is a community of the king where his followers learn to trust and obey, give and forgive as he has. It is in the family of faith and the fellowship of the forgiven where we become like our Savior, merciful and humble.<sup>18</sup> Disciples learn to follow Jesus with other disciples. Together they learn to serve, forgive and love one another. By this, others will know that they are truly his disciples (John 13:35).

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## Chapter 5

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### **Discipleship 5.0: The End of This Age - His Return** *(Matthew 24-25)*

*Christ's great, universal mission must be fulfilled before he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords. His blood "purchased redemption for every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). How and when will this happen?*

**T**he church, made up of the people of God, is not just a family, or just a community—it is a *communitas*, a community on a mission. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). God’s people are not called to live in “the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. There is his commission, his work.”<sup>19</sup> The good

news of the kingdom must be preached to all nations before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). Jesus followers must be made among all peoples. Christ's great, universal mission must be fulfilled before he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords. His blood purchased redemption "for every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). How and when will this happen?

## **The Signs of the End of the Age and Christ's Return**

Less than a week before his crucifixion, Jesus spoke with his disciples about the sign of his coming and the end of the age. Matthew's fifth and final major teaching section (chapters 24 and 25) summarizes his teaching in what has come to be known as the "Olivet Discourse." His teaching can be outlined as follows:

- Signs of the End of the Age (Matthew 24:1–29)
- The Sign of Christ's Return (Matthew 24:30–35)
- Keeping Watch—Awake to Eternal Realities (Matthew 24:36–51)
- Keeping Watch—Awake to Personal Preparation (Matthew 25:1–13)
- Keeping Watch—Awake to Kingdom Responsibilities (Matthew 25:14–30)
- Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment (Matthew 25:31–46)

### **Signs of the End of the Age: Increasing Labor Pains (Matthew 24:1–29)**

*"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time."  
(Romans 8:22)*

When Jesus approached Jerusalem the week before his death, crowds welcomed him with shouts of praise. With great expectation and enthusiasm they greeted Jesus: "Hosanna

(save) to the Son of David (the king)! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna (save) in the highest!” (Matthew 21:4). But as he saw the city, Jesus wept and lamented.

If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and your children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you. (Luke 19:41–44).

A day later, as Jesus was leaving the temple area with his disciples, they called his attention to its magnificent buildings. “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another, every one will be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). As the disciples made their way across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives, they approached Jesus privately and wanted to know more about what he had said about the temple. They asked him, “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

Jesus addressed first their question about “when” by using the analogy of a woman giving birth. He described the signs of the end of the age as labor pains, as this age gives birth to the new age of the Messiah. He warned them of false messiahs who will deceive many, and of wars and rumors of wars, telling them not to be alarmed. Those things must happen before the end comes (Matthew 24:6). He then spoke of further signs: “Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7). Jesus explained, “All these are the “beginning of labor pains” (Matthew 24:8), indicating that the frequency and intensity of such birth pains will increase as the end approaches. Jesus also clearly taught his disciples that persecution would increase:

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated of all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:9–14).

The persecution of Jesus' followers will be worldwide, indicating the presence of his disciples as his witnesses in every nation before the end comes. Thus, the final sign before the end of the age is the fulfillment of Christ's commission—the making of disciples of all nations.

Jesus then described the destruction of the temple prophesied by Daniel (Daniel 9:27). He warned that unparalleled tribulation would follow. In fact, except for God's mercy in shortening the terrible time of affliction, no one would survive. False messiahs and false prophets will perform convincing miracles and many people will follow them. Jesus warned his disciples not to be deceived or try to find a secret messiah. His coming will not be a secret event; rather it will be just as visible as flashing lightning. Even the heavenly bodies will be affected, stars will no longer remain in the sky and the sun and moon will not provide light (Matthew 24:15–29).

### **The Sign of Christ's Return: Parable of the Fig Tree (Matthew 24:30–35)**

*“Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.” (Matthew 24:33)*

Having described the signs of the end, Jesus addressed the

question regarding the sign of his return and the end of the age. He explained: “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). When he returns, all God’s people will be gathered to meet him, but those who rejected his salvation will grieve their tragic choice. Using the illustration of a fig tree, Jesus instructed his disciples about the nearness and certainty of his return. He told them:

As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know summer is near. So it will be when you see all these things, you know it (he) is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation (race) will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away (Matthew 24:32–35).

Luke recorded Jesus’ description of the fall of Jerusalem in more explicit terms: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near...Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20, 24). It may have been that Luke was writing after the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If so, he would have had a clearer understanding of what took place some forty years after Jesus spoke these words. John wrote his Gospel and the book of Revelation several decades after Jerusalem’s fall, and in neither book is it mentioned. But the nearness of the Lord’s return is clearly evident in both. Apparently, the destruction of the temple was not as closely connected to his return as might be implied from Jesus’ description of the signs of the end and the sign of his coming. A generation had passed, the temple was gone, but Jesus had not yet returned.

The telescoping together of Jerusalem’s destruction and the end of the age with the coming of Jesus in power and great glory



is typical of prophetic perspective. The disciples' questions reflected this perspective as they tied together the destruction of the temple with the end of the age and Christ's return. Throughout Scripture the Day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah is always near.<sup>20</sup> Initially, it was understood as a singular event in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the Day of the Lord, in fact, involves two comings of the Messiah. The Messiah has come but he will come a second time. And his second coming is near, but the time element between his two comings is not clear. That the Son of Man will return is certain. But when he will return is uncertain. The immediacy and the uncertainty of the time of Christ's return underscore the need for continual watchfulness. We now turn to several parables that call attention to this necessity of constant readiness.

**Keeping Watch – Awake to Eternal Realities: The Parables of the Flood, the Thief at Night, and the Returning Master (Matthew 24:36–51)**

*“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”  
(Matthew 24:36)*

When will Jesus return? “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36). Although there may be signs of the times, the actual day and time of the Lord's return is uncertain. Life goes on, as in the days of Noah when people were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving their children in marriage. They knew nothing about what was going to happen until the flood came and suddenly swept them away. So it will be when Jesus returns. One person will be suddenly snatched away to judgment, but another to blessing (Matthew 24:37–41).

In the Gospel of Luke the additional illustration of the days of Lot is described (Luke 17:28–29). As in the time of Noah,

people were eating, drinking, buying and selling, planting and building—living life, unaware judgment was coming. Although both the days of Noah and Lot were clearly days of evil, even in the midst of great wickedness life went on.

Thus, the people were caught off guard, totally unaware of eternal realities which, of course, would eventually include a day of reckoning. So it will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus told his disciples another parable: “But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into” (Matthew 24:43). So they also must be prepared, for Jesus may return at a time not anticipated.

Jesus told still another parable underscoring the uncertainty of the day and hour of his return. A master put one of his servants in charge of all his other servants and all his possessions. Assuming his master would be gone a long time, the servant began to mistreat his fellow servants and spend time partying. Unexpectedly, the master returned. What do you think he will do with this unfaithful and foolish servant? He will punish him and put him out of the household (Matthew 24:45–51). With this parable Jesus added the issues of accountability and faithfulness. Watching is not merely waiting. It is waiting responsibly. It is faithfully being about the master’s business. Jesus will expand on these matters in a subsequent parable.

**Keeping Watch – Awake to Personal Preparation: The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13)**

*“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” (Matthew 25:13)*

To be a bridesmaid was a great honor. Adequate preparation was absolutely essential. Jesus indicated that when he returns, the kingdom of heaven will be like a group of bridesmaids (unmarried virgins) waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom. Five were adequately prepared, five were not. Those who were not prepared brought only their lamps filled with oil, but no additional oil. The other five bridesmaids brought filled lamps as well as extra oil. The bridegroom was late and did not arrive until midnight. By then all the bridesmaids had fallen asleep. Awakened by the announcement of the coming of the bridegroom, the bridesmaids discovered their lamps were going out. Those with extra oil had just enough and prepared their lamps. When the other bridesmaids begged for some of their oil, they had none to give. They would have to go and buy more oil. But while they were away the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready went in to the wedding banquet. When the other bridesmaids returned, the door had been shut and they were not allowed to enter (Matthew 25:1–12). The message was clear: be prepared! Watching for Christ's return is to be aware and alert not only to eternal realities but to personal preparation. Although his return may be imminent, it may also be delayed. He certainly will come, but the day and the hour only the Father knows.

### **Keeping Watch – Awake to Kingdom Responsibilities: The Parable of the Three Servants (Matthew 25:14–30)**

*“For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” (Matthew 25:29)*

The Parable of the Three Servants amplifies the story Jesus had just told his disciples about the master's servants (Matthew 24:45–51). In this case the master, before going on a journey, put three servants in charge. To one he gave five bags of money, to another he gave two, and to another he gave one,

each according to his ability. The servant with five bags and the servant with two bags each invested the money and doubled his master's funds. But the servant with one bag, afraid of his master's response, buried the money. When the master returned to settle accounts, the servants who had doubled his money were rewarded. But the servant who had buried his one bag was dealt with severely. He was put out of the master's household and his bag of money was given to the servant who had doubled his five bags (Matthew 25:14–27). Jesus concluded: "For everyone who has will be given even more, and he will have in abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him" (Matthew 25:28–29). Faithfulness results in fruitfulness and multiplication, and to such a person more will be given for the master is also a good steward, investing in those who are good and faithful servants.

A similar parable, the Parable of the Ten Minas, is found in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 19:11–27). A departing nobleman gave each of ten servants one mina, about three months' wages, and instructed them to put this money to work until he returned. Merely preserving his money was not what he wanted, for upon his return he, like the master, rewarded those who had invested and multiplied his money. But he took away the money from the servant who had merely protected it and not invested it. Both of these parables clearly teach that watching for the return of the Master is not passive preservation of what he has given to his followers. It is active investment. Jesus told his disciples, "You did not choose me but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last..." (John 15:16). Fruit that lasts multiplies. "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8) were his words to the Twelve as he sent them out two by two to the lost sheep of Israel, for to them had been entrusted the good news of the kingdom. And to them he would give his universal commission to preach the good news of the kingdom to all creation and make disciples of all nations. And it was when this good news had been

preached in all the world and followers made in all nations that the end would come. We now come to Jesus' final parable, which addresses the response and result of this worldwide mission by faithful stewards of the gospel.

### **Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment: The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31–46)**

*“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:40)*

When Jesus returns as King, he will separate the nations. On the right he will put the sheep, on the left the goats. He will invite the sheep to enter his eternal kingdom, but the goats will be sent away into eternal fire (Matthew 25:31–34, 46). Clearly, this is a parable of final judgment when all will be rewarded or punished based on how they treated Jesus:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (Matthew 25:35–36)

Surprised, the sheep wanted to know when they did all these things for Jesus. The goats, likewise taken by surprise, wanted to know when they did not treat Jesus this way (Matthew 25:37–39, 41–44).

The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me...I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these (my brothers), you did not do for me.” (Matthew 25:40, 45)

Who are “the least of these brothers of mine”? Their description and how they were treated has led some to hold that they are the poor. If this were true, it would mean that salvation is based on good works—proper treatment of the poor. And if that interpretation were true, it would mean that the nations can be saved apart from the good news of the kingdom. But if that were true, there would have been no need for Jesus to die on the cross and rise again. If salvation comes through caring for the poor, the Great Commission becomes unnecessary and confusing. Caring for the poor is indeed taught throughout Scripture.<sup>21</sup> God has a special concern for the needy. Jesus came to preach “good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18). But to make treatment of the poor the basis of salvation is not the teaching of Scripture.

Who, then, are “the least of these brothers of mine?”<sup>22</sup> Who are Jesus’ brothers? When Jesus was asked this question, he pointed to the disciples. He explained that people who obey his Father’s will are his family (Matthew 12:47–50; cp. Luke 8:21). Christ’s brothers are his disciples, hearers and doers of his commands. How people treat them is in reality the way they are treating Jesus himself (Matthew 10:40–42). But why were the “least of these” suffering such deprivation and mistreatment? Was it because they were poor or was it because they were persecuted?

Jesus had warned his disciples that they would be persecuted and hated because of him (Matthew 24:9). What Jesus had told them when he first sent them out to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:16–39), he repeated to them as they prepared to go into all the world. They would receive the same type of treatment that he received. Some would welcome them and believe the good news of the kingdom. Others would refuse to receive them and even oppose and persecute them.

This solidarity and identity of Christ with his followers

is an expression and extension of the solidarity and identity of God with his people throughout the Old Testament. God told Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” (Genesis 12:2–3). Nations were blessed and cursed based on their response to Israel (Numbers 21:20–25). Even when Israel as a nation was unfaithful to God and became idolatrous, for the sake of a chastened righteous and faithful remnant God judged the very nations he had used to punish his wayward people because of their pride and abusive treatment of God’s people (Jeremiah 50:6–20).<sup>23</sup> The presence of God with his people, through whom the knowledge of his salvation is to be communicated to the nations, was expanded and extended through his Son, Jesus the Messiah, and his body, the church. The solidarity and identity of God with his people now includes all the descendants of Abraham who belong to Christ through faith: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27–29).

As the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed in all the world to all nations, some will be receptive and responsive to Christ’s messengers, others will be closed and resistant. But even among largely resistant “goat nations” there will be “people of peace” who believe and receive the message, showing hospitality to Christ’s persecuted followers, feeding them, clothing them and visiting them in prison.<sup>24</sup>

On that great and final day there will be disciples of all nations when the sheep are separated from the goats. There will be sheep of every tongue, tribe, kindred, and people, standing before the throne (Revelation 5:9). Christ’s commission will have been completed. The good news will have been proclaimed throughout the world. Salvation will have come to all people. The words of Scripture will have been fulfilled as “All nations

you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring honor to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God” (Psalm 86:9–10).

## Conclusion: Making and Multiplying Disciples

*Jesus made and multiplied disciples and told us to do the same. He chose his disciples to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (John 15:16). We were born to reproduce, chosen to be fruitful and multiply.*

Jesus calls us to come to him, follow him and go for him. Matthew summarized what the apostles were taught and were to teach believers concerning his way, his witnesses, his kingdom, his people and his return. In five teaching sections he gave us what Christ commanded his followers to obey and teach others to do. Jesus made and multiplied disciples and told us to do the same—make and multiply obedient followers, disciples of all nations who demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Devotion to Christ: walking in his ways, doing the will of the Father
- Devotion to Christ’s church: walking in his ways, doing the will of the Father. . .together with His family
- Devotion to Christ’s Mission: walking in his ways, doing the will of the Father. . .together with his family. . .as his witness to the ends of the earth

As the Twelve became disciples of Jesus by learning to obey what he commanded, they likewise made disciples, training believers by exhortation and example to become true followers of Jesus Christ. As they had been disciples, so they discipled new believers. In so doing they began an infinitely reproducible process that continues to this day—disciples of Jesus Christ making disciples until disciples are made of all



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nations. For this purpose Christ chose his disciples: “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will remain” (John 15:16). We were born to reproduce. We were chosen to be fruitful and multiply. We have been commissioned to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples of all peoples.<sup>25</sup> Then the end will come. Jesus will return! Hallelujah! Maranatha!

# Notes

## Preface

1. John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Missions Until He Comes* Rapidly multiplying discipling movements are taking place today resulting in the evangelization of nations in Asia and Africa. See Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: a Discipleship Re-Revolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011); Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

## Introduction

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), 50. “Cheap grace,” says Bonhoeffer, “is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession... grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate” (36). See David Watson, *Called & Committed: World-Changing Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1982), and John Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of our Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010) for an urgent call to “decisive” and “radical” discipleship by two noted English pastors.

## Chapter 1 – Discipleship 1.0

3. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 2006), 29–30. Hull has identified 212 commands of Christ. John Piper summarized Christ’s commands in 50 “demands” in order “to probe the meaning and the motivation of Jesus’ commands in connection with his person and work” (*What Jesus Demands from the World*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 19. See Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: a Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) for a thorough exposition of what the Bible teaches about discipleship and Jim Putnam, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Downers Grove, IL: NavPress, 2010) for a practical implementation of discipleship in a local church.
4. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993). “This Gospel or one of its sources may have been used as a training manual for new Christians; rabbis taught oral traditions, but Jewish Christians needed a body of Jesus’ teachings in writing for Gentile converts,” 45.
5. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 44–45.

### *Making and Multiplying Disciples*

6. Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., n.d.), xix–xxiii.
7. Thomas Chalmers, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection,” *The Protestant Pulpit: An Anthology of Master Sermons from the Reformation to Our Own Day* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1947), 50–62. The title of a sermon from John 2:15 by the Scottish Presbyterian pastor addressing the two ways “to displace from the human heart its love of the world”—by showing the “world’s vanity” or by showing “the worthiness of God. “My purpose is to show that from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual and the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it,” 50. Although the three “habits of the heart” of almsgiving, prayer and fasting are key “spiritual disciplines” in nurturing a love of the Father, they are not the only ones. Richard J. Foster has identified additional “classical disciplines” that believers have practiced over the centuries to nurture spiritual life and growth such as meditation, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance and celebration (*Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth*, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). For a further exposition of these three “habits of the heart” see D.A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978, 55–73).
8. See Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: a Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 145–167. “Objection #5: It’s Offensive to Claim Jesus Is the Only Way to God.”
9. The primary and essential relationship is with Jesus himself. Abiding, being at home with him, is to abide in his word and in his love by keeping his commands, and his command is that we love each other as he has loved us (see John 15:1–16). See Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

## **Chapter 2 – Discipleship 2.0**

10. Elizabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 108. The biography of Jim Elliot written by his widow telling the story of Operation Auca, an attempt by five young American missionaries to reach the violent Waorani tribe in eastern Ecuador in 1956. All five were killed by the tribe. As an immediate result of their death, over a thousand young people responded to the call of world missions. Subsequent peaceful contacts resulted in the salvation of most of the tribe, including those who had killed Jim Elliot and his four fellow missionaries. The quotation is taken from the October 28, 1949, entry of Jim’s diary.

## **Chapter 3 – Discipleship 3.0**

11. Jesus alone used the term “Son of Man” of himself. Although he did not deny that he was the “Son of David” (of royal messianic lineage) or the “Son of

- God” (of heavenly divine lineage), he preferred to use this less familiar and less controversial title when speaking of his ministry, suffering and glorification. The probable background for “Son of Man” is Daniel’s vision of the coming of one “like a son of man...[who] was given authority, glory and sovereign dominion; all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13–14). In using this term, Jesus combined the earthly suffering servant of Isaiah 53 with the heavenly glorified person of Daniel 7. “The Son of Man by definition was an apocalyptic figure who would come with the clouds as the messianic figure in the eschatological consummation. However, before he fulfills this eschatological role, the Son of Man must appear on earth in a mission of humility and suffering ‘to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45)” (George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 324–325. See Luke 22:66–71 for the use of all three titles.
12. In Mark and Luke the kingdom is never called “the kingdom of heaven” but always the “kingdom of God.” With the exception of four occurrences, in Matthew the kingdom is consistently described as the “kingdom of heaven.” One of these exceptions is found in the story of the rich young ruler where both “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” describe the same kingdom: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God’” (Matthew 19:23–24). In Matthew, the most Jewish of the four Gospels, “kingdom of heaven” is found, whereas in Mark and Luke, addressed to largely Gentile audiences, the kingdom is described as the “kingdom of God.” The high regard Jews had for God caused them to be hesitant to even pronounce his name, thus substituting the word “heaven” (where he lived) for his name. We see this in the story of the prodigal son who, when he came to his senses, confessed he had sinned against “heaven” (Luke 15:18). He avoided using God’s name, especially in a pig pen!
13. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 37.

## Chapter 4 – Discipleship 4.0

14. The word “church” (*ekklesia*) is found on the lips of Jesus only in Matthew, and then only two times (16:18; 18:17). It is found over one hundred times in the rest of the New Testament and refers to the universal and local assembly of “called out ones”, the community of God’s people.
15. Although this passage could be applied to prayer, the context indicates Jesus is addressing the “binding and loosing” (withholding or bestowing) of forgiveness and fellowship where he is present when two or three witnesses are gathered in his name in dealing with a sinning member. “These terms normally used for tying up or imprisoning versus freeing or releasing, provide a natural metaphor for condemning or acquitting in a court. As terms regularly used for rabbis’ legislative authority in interpreting Scripture, they could naturally apply to judicial situations as well” (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP*

- Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*), 94.
16. ESV: “seventy times seven” (*heos hebdomontakis hepta*). It is not clear whether this phrase means seventy-seven or seventy times seven. Either way, Jesus clearly means unlimited forgiveness. Rabbinic teaching based on Amos 1:3; Job 33:29, 30 held that forgiveness was demanded only three times.
  17. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. “The whole context of this passage on church discipline is mercy and forgiveness; forgiveness qualifies (but does not annul) the force of this passage on disciplining unrepentant offenders in the Christian community. The contextual emphasis is the hope of bringing back the erring, not confirming them in their guilt” (94).
  18. “With children, the goal is to train them to walk, talk, feed themselves, and obey. And such training takes place within a family. So it is with disciples who are to be taught to walk in the ways of the Lord and to obey all Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20). The training of Jesus’ disciples took place in the context of personal relationships. Jesus called the Twelve that they “might be with him” before sending them out (Mark 6:14). He taught and trained his disciples just as parents teach and train their children, within the context familial relationships. Jesus disciplined the Twelve in the family setting of a “small group,” which after Pentecost would frequently be within the context of the home” (John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Missions Until He Comes* (Los Angeles, CA: Foursquare Missions International/Foursquare Media, 2009) 50–51.

## Chapter 5 – Discipleship 5.0

19. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 7. “We are people of the Way ... the nature of authentic community (is) that of a *communitas* formed around a mission and undertaken by a group of uncertain but brave comrades ... calling to mind how Jesus and the early church went about spreading the message” (Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 261. “When the future of the Church becomes more important than the future of the world, the Church has no future.” (Ralph Winter, Missions Conference, Pattaya, Thailand, 1982).
20. Joel 1:15; 2:2; 3:14; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:14; Matthew 10:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 1:3; 22:10, 12. “The prophets were little interested in chronology, the future was always imminent... there is in biblical prophecy a tension between the immediate and the distant future: the distant is viewed through the transparency of the immediate. It is true that the early church lived in the expectancy of the return of the Lord, and it is the nature of biblical prophecy to make it possible for every generation to live in the expectancy of the end” (George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 22. See also Charles L. Holman, *Til Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Expectation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).
21. See Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), chapter 5, “God and the Poor,” 41–63.

22. John L. Amstutz, “Humanitarianism With a Point,” *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, edited by Kelly O’Donnell (Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey Library, 2002), 37–40. “Who are these brothers? The majority view throughout church history has taken them to be some or all of Christ’s disciples since the word ‘least’ (*elachiston*) is the superlative form of the adjective ‘little (ones)’ (*mikroi*), which without exception in Matthew refers to the disciples (10:42; 18:6, 10, 14; cf. also 5:19; 11:11), while ‘brothers’ in this Gospel (and usually in the New Testament more generally) when not referring to literal, biological siblings, always means spiritual kin (5:22–23, 47; 7:3–5; 12:48–50; 18:15 (2x), 21, 35; 23:8; 28:10) ... The minority view throughout church history, which is probably a majority view today, especially in churches with a healthy social ethic, is that these ‘brothers’ are any needy people in the world ... yet while there is ample teaching in many parts of Scripture on the need to help all the poor of the world (most notably in Amos, Micah, Luke and James), it is highly unlikely that this is Jesus’ point here. Rather, his thought will closely parallel that of 10:42. The sheep are people whose works demonstrate that they have responded properly to Christ’s messengers and therefore to his message, however humble the situation or actions of those involved. That itinerant Christian missionaries regularly suffered in these ways and were in frequent need of such help is classically illustrated with the example of Paul (see esp. 2 Cor. 11:23–27) and the teaching of the *Didache* (ca. A.D. 95)” (*The New American Commentary*, Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 1991–2007).
23. See Numbers 20:14–21 (cf. Psalm 137:7; Ezekiel 25:12–14; Obadiah). As a kingdom of priests who were to be his light to the nations, the reception or rejection of God’s people was in reality an acknowledgement or refusal to acknowledge the true and living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus even nations, such as Assyria and Babylon, which God used as instruments of his judgment upon his wayward people, were judged for their arrogance and pride in seeking to destroy God’s people in the name of their gods, refusing to acknowledge or submit to the God of Israel, creator of heaven and earth (Jeremiah 51:1–24; Habakkuk 1:5, 6, 12, 13; 2:4–8).
24. In contrast to the widespread rejection of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus—who, with Pilate’s permission, secretly took the body of Jesus down from the cross and wrapped and buried it—revealed they were truly disciples of Jesus (John 20:38–42). As Christ’s witnesses, the disciples went out preaching the gospel first to the Jewish nation and then to the Gentile nations. Some received them and their message, while others did not—like Saul of Tarsus who opposed and persecuted the earliest disciples. When encountered by the living Christ on his way to Damascus to find and arrest “followers of the Way,” Saul was shocked to discover he had been persecuting not only the followers of Jesus, but Jesus himself. He heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” When he asked, “Who are you, Lord?” the surprising answer came back: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:4, 5).
25. “We know that Jesus had a timetable for His public ministry. He had just three years to prepare people to launch a movement that was planned before the foundation of the world. So He chose disciple-making as his strategy, the most

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time-consuming strategy that one could imagine. But within seventy years the cadre of people around Jesus had taken His good news into every corner of the Roman world. Do we have better efficiencies in mind?" (Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 40.

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# National Church Development

(From *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes*, pages 27-35, Used by permission.)

## An Infinitely Reproducible Pattern: A Life Cycle

Christ's call to "make disciples of all nations" requires an infinitely reproducible way of doing things. Throughout the first and subsequent centuries the growth and expansion of the Church has been characterized by the development of indigenous national church movements within cultures and countries. Such multiplying movements are characterized by what is infinitely reproducible, much like a life cycle.

Full development of a national church movement is similar to a life cycle, which moves through the stages of life from childhood to adolescence to young adult to older adult.

Like a *child*, the church is birthed by the Spirit and grows in the way of the Lord.

Like a *youth*, the church is nurtured and matures in unity and love.

Like a *young adult*, the church is fruitful and multiplies and gives birth to other churches.

Like an *older adult*, the church is supportive and sends workers to take the gospel to regions yet untouched with the gospel.

Perhaps the most full-orbed way in which to picture the full cycle national church development is a wheel consisting of four stages or phases. Each stage in the cycle has the goal of reproducing what is infinitely reproducible. The goal of Stage 1 is to develop responsible disciples who reproduce disciples, becoming a local congregation. The goal of Stage 2 is to develop responsible leaders who reproduce leaders, edifying and equipping the congregation. The goal of Stage 3 is to develop responsible congregations that reproduce congregations, becoming a national movement. The goal of Stage 4 is to develop responsible national movements that send missionaries and reproduce other national movements, becoming an international movement. Such a pattern is infinitely reproducible and is somewhat like a wheel that continues to roll. More specifically, the process could be described in the following way:

***Stage 1***

From sinner to believer, from believer to obedient disciple of Jesus Christ

***Stage 2***

From obedient disciple to contributing member of the body of Christ, from contributing member to equipping leader in the body of Christ

***Stage 3***

From reproducing leader to church growth and expansion, from church expansion to church multiplication into a national movement

***Stage 4***

From church multiplication to cross-culture involvement, from cross-culture involvement to sending missionaries

... which initiates another national church movement cycle.

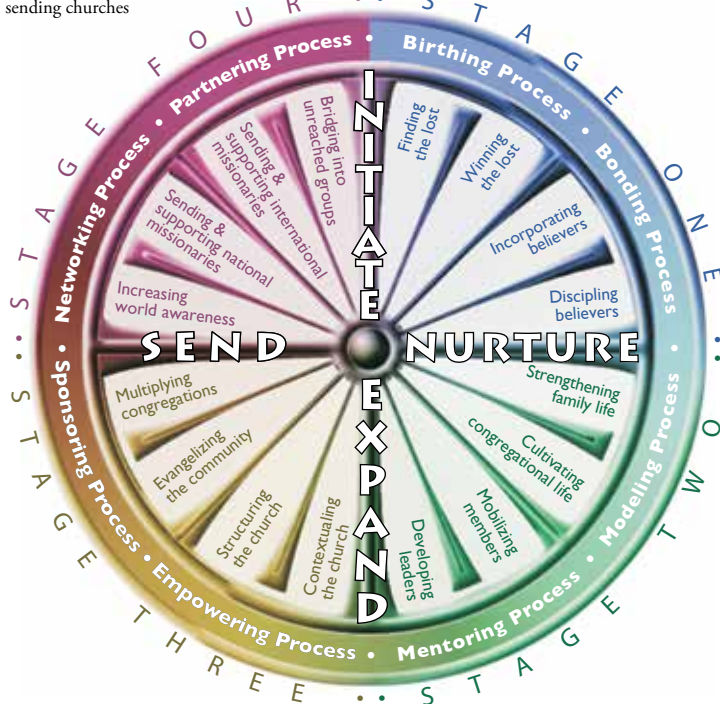
## National Church Development – Four Stages

### Stage 4 - Send - extending

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing missionary sending churches

### Stage 1 - Intitiate - evangelizing

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples



### Stage 3 - Expand - multiplying

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing congregations

### Stage 2 - Nurture - strengthening

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders

### Stage 1: Initiate – evangelizing. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples.

We evangelize by winning the lost to Christ and by planting churches. The goal of Stage 1 is to make responsible, reproducing disciples. The task, therefore, is twofold. First, it requires communicating the gospel to people who are without Christ, the lost. Transferring believing church members from one church to another church is not evangelism. Rather, the

lost must be sought, found, and won. Like Jesus' methods, the pattern is one of "go and tell" evangelism as well as "come and see" evangelism. Effective ways must be found to get the gospel to people. Then effective ways must be found to explain the gospel for people so that they can respond and make a meaningful decision concerning God's gracious offer of forgiveness of sin and eternal life based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The message is authenticated by both the lifestyle of believers showing the love of God and the presence of the miraculous that demonstrates the power of God. This gives the Holy Spirit the opportunity to convict of sin and give new birth, bringing about genuine conversion.

Second, the task of Stage 1 requires planting the church. As with a newborn child, the birthing process must be followed by the bonding process. Those who repent and believe the gospel must be openly identified with and warmly welcomed into the family of God. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command, repentance and faith are to be followed by public confession in the waters of baptism and the receiving of the promised Holy Spirit as occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Beginning a local fellowship of believers is essential, for new converts need care and teaching. They need to be integrated into the family and taught to continue in obedience to all Christ commanded, thereby proving to be His disciples. Such responsible disciples will begin to reproduce themselves by winning their families and friends to the Savior. In the case of a pioneer situation, the sending church will seek to avoid incomplete strategies, namely, evangelizing without making disciples, making disciples without planting churches, or merely establishing a "token presence" in a region or country.

**Stage 2: Nurture – strengthening. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders.**

We strengthen the church by establishing sound doctrine and

by training leaders. The goal of Stage 2 is to make responsible, reproducing leaders. Therefore, the task of this stage is also twofold. First, the developing of godly character is essential for a healthy church. The primary arena for shaping such Christlike character is in the home, which is the church in its simplest and most original form. Here the soundness of doctrine can be put to the test. If the Christian faith is to become truly a part of the culture, it must be modeled by the parents and owned by the children. It must become multi-generational. Thus, parents, especially fathers, need to be trained to lead their families in the ways of the Lord. Since the church is in reality an extended family, the strengthening of family life is foundational to the cultivating of healthy congregational life.

Second, the task of Stage 2 requires training leaders. As with a maturing adolescent, the modeling process must be supplemented by the mentoring process. Training in maturity must be complemented by training in ministry. Growing up must result in giving out. Transforming takers into givers is the challenge. Because each member of the body of Christ has something to give, believers must be helped to identify, develop and use their divine giftedness for the good of others. Leaders, therefore, are gifted to serve, and they are gifted to equip others to do likewise. Such a releasing ministry is first seen in the home. Mobilizing people for the good of others is initially a family affair. Those who model servant-leadership and lead their families well are those who are to lead the body of Christ. Thus, emerging leaders are identified and developed so that the leadership base can be enlarged and the body of Christ edified and expanded. Making responsible, reproducing leaders is training leaders not only as leaders of followers but also as leaders of leaders. In Stage 2, leadership development and training are high priorities, aiding in increasing both the quantity and quality of leaders in anticipation of the type of expansion required for nationalization in Stage 3. In the case of a pioneer situation, the sending church will seek to

avoid overuse of event-centered ministry, one-generational perspectives, edifice mentalities, rigid institutionalism, or excessive indebtedness.

**Stage 3: Expand – multiplying. Goal: to make responsible, reproducing churches.**

We multiply congregations within a region or nation by structuring for self-expression and self-government and by evangelizing through self-propagation and self-support. The goal of Stage 3 is to make responsible, reproducing congregations who multiply culturally appropriate churches that together become a regional or national church movement. Therefore, the task of Stage 3 is again twofold. First, it requires releasing the church in self-expression and self-government. A church must find a way to fit its environment so that it does not appear foreign and, thereby, erect unnecessary barriers to understanding and acceptance of the gospel. Its style of worship, fellowship, teaching, caring, and outreach must be appropriate to the culture in which it is ministering. Such contextualizing of ministry releases the church to serve its society more effectively and fruitfully. Further, the church must be structured in such a way as to release contextualized ministry. Form must follow and free function. Therefore, church government, organization, and administration should be kept simple, flexible, and practical, empowering the church to carry out its ministry in its community and culture.

Second, the task of Stage 3 requires multiplying into a regional or national movement through evangelizing its “Jerusalem” and multiplying churches in its “Judea.” As with a growing young adult, the empowering process to help them “stand on their own two feet” must be complemented with the sponsoring process to give them meaningful opportunities to “try their wings.” Expansion growth through winning the lost in its own culture requires a church to be involved in continual

evangelism that is both sensitive and flexible. A combination of media, and mass and personal evangelistic methods will probably be necessary. Both programmed and spontaneous evangelism will be needed. This involves the witness of the corporate body of believers as well as the witness of individuals to family and friends within their sphere of influence. Extension growth through the starting of new churches within the larger region should follow. Like young adults, young congregations tend to be most reproductive within the first half of their life span. Church planting by local churches may need to be complemented by mobile apostolic type church planting teams that can pioneer churches at greater distances. The development of appropriate regional structures will be essential. Where a sending church has been involved in pioneering another region or country, it will seek to provide affirming and freeing family-type relationships which avoid paternalism while retaining New Testament order. Further, it will seek to avoid politicizing or external ownership while the newly nationalized church will seek to avoid moving from Stage 1 to Stage 3 with inadequate focus on Stage 2.

**Stage 4: Send – extending. Goal: to make, responsible, reproducing missionary-sending churches.**

We extend the church and advance the kingdom by sending and supporting missionaries and by bridging into other peoples, cultures and languages. The goal of Stage 4 is to make responsible, reproducing missionary sending national churches who make disciples of the nations in fulfillment of Christ's mandate. Therefore, the task of Stage 4 is twofold. First, it requires reaching nearby cultural groups. Many national churches have a blind spot when it comes to developing home missions outreaches among "Samaritans" who are culturally different but geographically near. Increasing awareness of the diversity of the world around them and its need for the gospel is best done initially through intercession. As people develop



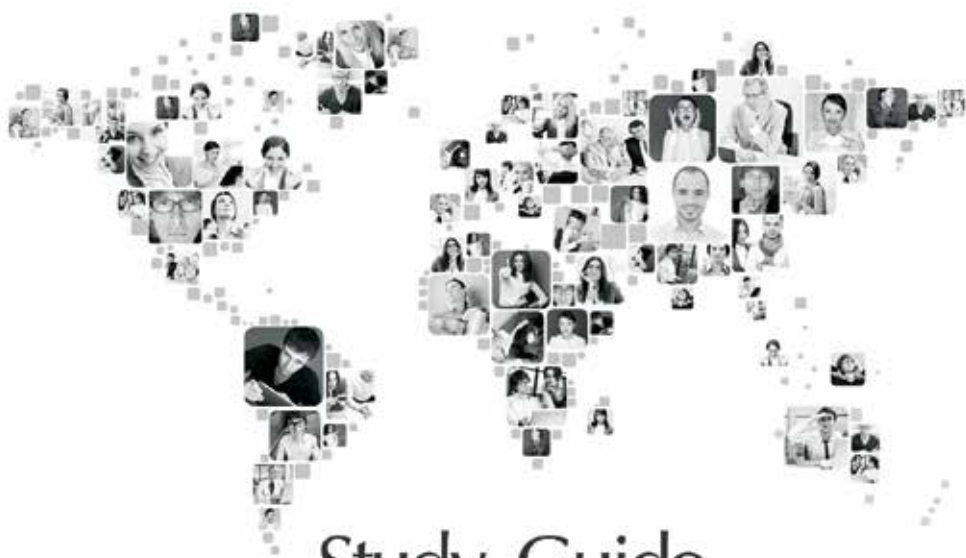
*Making and Multiplying Disciples*

hearts of compassion, they will hear and respond when the Lord of the harvest begins to call laborers into his harvest. The national church will catch a vision and begin sending and supporting missionaries to culturally diverse groups within its own region and country.

Second, the task of Stage 4 requires reaching distant cultural groups in other countries, and is similar to an older adult who anticipates becoming a grandparent. The networking process of linking together those with common vision must be complemented by the partnering process of actually sharing together in a common task. Sending and supporting missionaries in another nation is a great challenge, especially when working among unreached groups. It frequently requires the expert counsel and the prayer and financial support of another national church. In some cases it may also require coordination and cooperation with missionaries from another national church who are also working within the same country. Sending churches will seek to avoid exporting their culture and methodologies or jumping from Stage 2 to Stage 4 with insufficient attention to Stage 3.

# MAKING & MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

THE MASTER'S PLAN OF DISCIPLESHIP



Study Guide

*Making and Multiplying Disciples*



***Becoming a Disciple***

4. Do you agree with Bonhoeffer that “non-discipleship Christianity” is a contradiction? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Do you believe discipleship is optional for believers? Why?

***Believing the Good News***

6. What is the “good news”? Why is it “good”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does it mean to believe the good news? How did you personally come to believe this good news?

***Living the Good News***

8. What is the first step of discipleship?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why water baptism? What is its meaning and significance?  
When were you baptized in water?

**Part One - Making Disciples: the Teaching of the Apostles**

1. How did Christ's disciples make disciples of those who believed after the Day of Pentecost? (read Acts 2:42)

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2. What were the disciples to teach new believers? (read Matthew 28:20)

3. Where can what Christ taught be found? Why the Gospel of Matthew?

**Chapter 1 - Discipleship 1.0: The Sermon on the Mount – His Way (Matthew 5–7)**

4. What is the focus of Christ's teaching? (read Matthew 7:24–27)





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8. Why are they “blessed”—what are the eight things God promises to such a person?

9. Why do these beatitudes sound so different from how we would describe a “blessed” or “happy” person today?

10. Do you know anyone you would say is “blessed” or “happy”? Who would that be? How would you describe them? Why?

11. Would you say you are a “blessed” or “happy” person? Why?

*Salt and Light: Making a Difference (read Matthew 5:13–16)*

12. How is such a “blessed” or “happy” person like salt? How are they like light?

13. What can cause a person not to be salty? . . . not to be light?

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14. Would you describe yourself as a “salty” and “light-giving” person? Why?

***Loving Others: True Righteousness (read Matthew 5:17–48)***

15. Jesus came to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament). What does this mean? (see verses 17–18)

16. What is greatness in the kingdom of heaven? (see verse 19)

17. Why must our righteousness go beyond that of religious practices? (see verse 20)

18. What six examples does Jesus give to show the difference between inward and outward righteousness? (see verses 21–48)

19. In light of these examples how would you define true “righteousness”?

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20. Why does this kind of righteousness go beyond keeping rules?

21. “Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect.” What does this mean? Is this kind of love really possible? What would be needed to love like this?

22. How is your heart? What would be needed for you to love like this?



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4. How can these “habits of the heart” cultivate a love of the Father and replace a love of the world? (see 1 John 2:15–17)

5. What “habits of the heart” characterize you? Which ones would you like to put into practice, or practice more consistently? Why?

6. Which one is the most difficult for you to do? Why?

***Singleness of Heart: Mastered by the Master (read Matthew 6:19–24)***

7. What determines where our heart is, what is our master?  
(see verses 19–21)

8. What is a “good eye”? Why is it so important? (see verses 22–23)

9. Why is it so hard to serve two masters? (see verse 24)



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10. Where is your heart, what has mastered you? Why?

*First Things First: Worry-free Living (read Matthew 6:25–34)*

11. Why should we not worry about what we will eat, drink or wear? (see verses 25–31)

12. What should be our first and highest priority? What does this mean? (see verses 32–34)

13. What does God promise if we make this our highest priority? Why?

14. What is your highest priority, what is the focus of your life? Why?

***Reaping and Sowing: Judging and Discerning (read Matthew 7:1–6)***

1. What does “judge” mean? Why should we not judge another person? (see verses 1–2)



5. If God is like a father who gives good gifts to his children, why does he want us to ask? And why do we need to ask more than once or twice; why should we keep on asking? (see the parallel passage in Luke 11:5–13).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Do you keep on asking, or tend to give up? Why?

***The Golden Rule: Becoming Like the God We Serve (read Matthew 7:12)***

7. Why do you think this is called the Golden Rule? Why do you think Jesus put it positively rather than negatively?

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8. How does this Golden Rule sum up the Law and the Prophets (Old Testament)?

9. Why do we want others to treat us well? Then why do we struggle to treat others well? How do you treat others? Why?

***Two Doors and Two Roads: Which Way? (read Matthew 7:13–14)***

10. What are the two doors, the two ways and the two destinations?



***Good and Bad Fruit: Genuine and Counterfeit***  
***(read Matthew 7:15–23)***

14. How can you spot false prophets who look like sheep but inwardly are really ferocious wolves? (see verses 15–20)

15. What kind of fruit do false prophets produce?

16. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? Who will not?  
(see verse 21)

17. Why is the confession, “Lord, Lord” and the demonstration of miracles even in the name of the Lord not necessarily proof of a true relationship with God? (see verses 22–23)

18. What is proof that someone truly knows the Lord and the Lord knows them?

19. If you were arrested for being a follower of Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Why?



***Wise and Foolish Builders: Hearers and Doers***  
***(read Matthew 7:24–29)***

20. What is the difference between a wise man and a foolish man? (see verses 24–27) Which one are you? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
21. Why is putting Jesus' words into practice the true test of relationship with him? Why is obedience so important?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
22. Why did Jesus have authority and the teachers of the law did not? (see verses 28–29)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
23. What do you hear Jesus telling you to put into practice from this "Sermon on the Mount"? Why? How do you plan to do so? When do you plan to do so?

**Part Two - Multiplying Jesus Followers: the Witness of the Apostles**

1. When Jesus called his disciples to follow him, what did he say he would make them? (read Matthew 4:19) Why do you think Jesus used this analogy to describe what he would do with his disciples?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did Jesus see the multitudes? What was his response? (read Matthew 9:35–36)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why did Jesus want more workers? What did he ask his disciples to do? Why this? Who is “the Lord of the harvest”? (read Matthew 9:37–38)

**Chapter 2 - Discipleship 2.0: The Mission and Ministry –  
His Witnesses (Matthew 10)**

*The Messengers (read Matthew 10:1–4)*

4. What kind of authority did Jesus give to his twelve disciples?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Who were these twelve disciples? What do we know about them? Do you think they were ready to be sent out? Why?

*The Mission (read Matthew 10:5–6)*

6. Why did Jesus limit their mission to just Jews? How did Jesus describe them? Why?

*The Message and Ministry (read Matthew 10:7–8)*

7. What was their message? What was their ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What had they freely received? Why were they to freely give?

*The Manner (read Matthew 10:9–10)*

9. Why were the Twelve to “travel light” taking no money or extra clothes? What does “a worker is worth his keep” mean?

***The Receptive (read Matthew 10:11–13)***

10. Why were the disciples to look for a “worthy person”?  
What is the meaning of “worthy” or “person of peace”?  
(see Luke 10:5)

11. Why were the disciples to stay with such a “worthy person”?

***The Resistant (read Matthew 10:14–15)***

12. How were Jesus’ disciples to respond to those who would not welcome them? Why?

13. Why such a strong word of judgment spoken against those who refused to receive Jesus' messengers?

***The Response (read Matthew 10:16–39)***

14. Why are the disciples to be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves? What does it mean to be shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves? (see verse 16)

15. Who were the disciples to beware of? Why? (see verses 17–18)

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16. What were the disciples to do when on trial? (see verses 19–20)

17. Why would there be such strong opposition to and persecution of Christ's messengers? (see verses 21–25)

18. Who were they to fear? Who were they not to fear? Why? (see verses 26–32)

19. If Jesus is the “prince of peace”, what did he mean when he said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword? (see verses 33–39)

***The Reward (read Matthew 10:40–42)***

20. What is the reward for those who receive Christ’s messengers?

21. And what reward will the messengers themselves receive as “little ones” (Christ’s disciples)? (see Matthew 19:29)



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22. Jesus also sent out 72 more disciples two by two (see Luke 10:1–21). What is similar and what is different in the sending out of the 72 with the sending out of the 12? Why?

**Conclusion**

23. What may it cost us to know Christ and to make him known? Why?
24. What does it mean to “take up your cross and follow me”? What does this mean for you as a follower and messenger of Jesus Christ?

**Chapter 3 - Discipleship 3.0: The Message and Meaning – His Kingdom (Matthew 13)**

1. Why were some offended by Jesus and his message of the kingdom? What kind of a kingdom were they expecting and looking for? (read Matthew 11:2–6; Acts 1:6)

2. Why was “the acceptable year of the Lord” so unacceptable in his hometown of Nazareth? (read Luke 4:16–30)

**Parables of the Kingdom (read Matthew 13:1–3a, 10–17)**

3. Why did Jesus speak to the crowds in parables?

4. Why did he only explain the parables to his disciples?

**The Parable of the Four Soils: Response to the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 10:3b–9, 18–23)**

5. What is a parable? Why did Jesus use them to illustrate what the kingdom of heaven is like?
6. Why is the response to Jesus' message about the kingdom so varied? Who do you think is represented by each of the four different types of soil?

7. What is the point of the Parable of the Four Soils? Why is understanding this parable the key to understanding all parables? (see Mark 4:13)

8. Which soil represents you? Why? What soil would you like to represent you? Why?

**The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds: True and False Sons of the Kingdom (read Matthew 13:13–32, 36–42)**

9. What is the field in which good and counterfeit wheat is sown? Who is represented by the wheat? by the weeds?

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10. Who is the “evil one”? Why is he so opposed to the kingdom of heaven?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. When will separation take place of the wheat and the weeds? Why doesn't it take place sooner?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. What is the point of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds?

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Growth of the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 13:31–32)**

13. Are the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God the same or different? Why? (see Matthew 19:23, 24)

14. What is the point of the parable of the Mustard Seed?

**The Parable of the Leaven: Impact of the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 13:33–35)**

15. How is the Parable of the Leaven similar to the Parable of the Mustard Seed?

16. How is it different? What is the point of the Parable of the Leaven?

**The Parable of the Hidden Treasure: Cost of the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 13:44)**

17. The parables illustrated and explained the “mystery” of the kingdom of heaven. What is the “mystery of the kingdom”? Why was this “mystery” revealed to some and not to others?

18. How is a parable different from an allegory?

19. What is the point of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure?

**The Parable of the Pearl: Value of the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 13:45)**

20. How is the Parable of the Pearl similar to the Parable of the Hidden Treasure?

21. How is this parable different from the Parable of the Hidden Treasure? What is the point of the Parable of the Pearl?

**The Parable of the Fishing Net: Separation of the Kingdom  
(read Matthew 13:47–50)**

22. How is the Parable of the Fishing Net similar to the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds?



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23. How is this parable different than the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds?

24. What is the point of the Parable of the Fishing Net?

25. What is the destiny of the righteous and the wicked?

**Conclusion: Old and New Treasures (read Matthew 13:51–52)**

26. Why is the response to the message of the kingdom of heaven an eternal decision?

27. “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked his disciples. What was their response? What is your response? What do you not yet understand?

28. What is old? What is new? What are you hearing? What do you understand?

29. Is it possible to preach the good news of the kingdom without fully understanding it? Why? (see Luke 10:18–20) Do you think we can learn as we proclaim it (see Philemon vs. 6).

**Chapter 4 - Discipleship 4.0: the Community of the King  
– His People (Matthew 18)**

1. Relationship with Jesus is personal, but it is not private.  
Why?

**Life Together in God's Family**

2. Why do children grow best in families?

**Greatness in the Kingdom: Little Children and Lost Sheep  
(read Matthew 10:1–14)**

3. Why do you think the disciples were constantly arguing about who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Was it sibling rivalry? If not, what was it?

4. To whom does the kingdom of heaven belong? (see Matthew 5:3; 19:13–15)

5. What does it mean to “change and become like little children”? (see verses 2–4)

6. Why is welcoming and receiving one of these “little ones” in Jesus’ name welcoming him? (see verses 5–6a)

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7. What is the “reward” for causing one of these “little ones” to sin? Why such a severe punishment? (see verses 6b–7)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. If something causes us to sin, what should we do with the offending member of our body? Why? Is such a radical measure literal or figurative? Why? (see verses 8–9)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why should we not “look down” on one of these “little ones”? (see verse 10)

10. What is the point of the Parable of the Lost Sheep? How does it relate to what has been said about the “little ones”? (see verses 12–14)

11. Who are these “little ones”? Could they represent more than just little children? (see Matthew 10:42)

**Forgiveness in the Kingdom: Tough Love and Tender Mercy**  
(read Matthew 18:15–35)

12. What is the connection, if any, with this passage about a brother (or sister) sinning against you and the previous passage about causing people to sin?

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13. If someone in the family of God (the church) sins against you what are the steps to be taken to be reconciled? Why? (see verses 15–16)
14. What is to be done if the offending person refuses to listen even to the church? Why? (see verse 17)
15. Why is the agreement of two or three so powerful in this setting of disciplining an erring brother or sister? Do you think this would also apply to any kind of request made of the heavenly Father? Why? (see verses 18–20)

16. How many times should a person who sins against you be forgiven? Who can truly do this? Is this really possible? Why? (see verses 21–34)
17. What is the point of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant? (see verse 35)
18. Treating others as we want them to treat us is absolutely essential in keeping harmony and peace in the family. Why? (see Matthew 5:7; 7:1–5)



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19. Forgiveness is a two-way street—asking and giving forgiveness. Why?

20. What does it mean to “forgive from the heart”? How has God forgiven us?

21. Are you following Christ in a “community of the King” (the church)? Why?

22. What are you hearing Jesus say to you about true greatness and heartfelt forgiveness?

## **Chapter 5 - Discipleship 5.0: The End of This Age – His Return (Matthew 24–25)**

1. The church is the family of God, the community of the King, and it is also a *communitas*. What is a *communitas*? Why?

### **Signs of the End of the Age: Increasing Labor Pains (read Matthew 24:1–29)**

2. What were the questions the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of the temple? (see verse 3)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Jesus used the analogy of a woman in labor to describe the signs of the end of the age. What is implied in the use of the term “labor pains” as to the nature of these signs? How do such “labor pains” answer the question the disciples asked about “when will this happen”?

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4. What are the initial “labor pains” Jesus described? (see verses 4–8) What are the “labor pains” that follow these that indicate the end of the age? (see verses 9–14) In what way are they similar to, or different from, the previous “labor pains”?
5. What is the final “labor pain”? (see verse 14) What is significant about this sign?
6. What is the relationship of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem with the end of the age?

**Sign of Christ's Return: Parable of the Fig Tree  
(read Matthew 24:26-35)**

7. In answering the disciples' second question, what did Jesus say would be the sign of his return? (see verses 26-27) Will it be a secretive or public sign? Why?

8. What is the point of the Parable of the Fig Tree? (see verses 32-33)

9. How are we to understand Jesus' statement that "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened!"? (see verses 34-35)

**Keeping Watch—Awake to Eternal Realities: Parables of the Flood, Thief at Night, Returning Master (read Matthew 24:36–51)**

10. Who alone knows the day or hour of Christ's return? Why? (see verse 36)

11. In what ways will the days of Noah and the days of Lot be like the days when Christ returns? (see verses 37–39; see also the parallel passage in Luke 17:28–29)

12. What is the point of the Parable of the Thief at Night? (see verses 42–44)

13. What is the point of the Parable of the Returning Master? What additional element is found in this parable about watchfulness? (see verses 45–51)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Christ's return is certain but the time of his return is uncertain, how then should we live?

**Keeping Watch—Awake to Personal Condition: Parable of the Ten Virgins (read Matthew 25:1–13)**

15. What is the message of the Parable of the Ten Virgins? (see verse 13)

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16. Why could the oil not be shared with those whose lamps were going out? Why were five virgins shut out from the banquet?

17. Are you like the wise virgins or the foolish virgins? Why?

**Keeping Watch—Awake to Kingdom Responsibilities:  
Parable of the Three Servants (read Matthew 25:14–30)**

18. On what basis was each servant given the master's money? What was the basis of reward? Why? (see verses 14–23)

19. How is the Parable of the Faithful Servants different from the Parable of the Returning Master (see the previous passage in Matthew 24:45–51)?
20. What treasures have we been given for which we shall give an account one day when Jesus returns? How can we invest them?
21. Why is the one talent of the wicked and lazy servant given to the servant who already has five talents of money? Is this fair? Wise? Why? (see verses 26–29)



22. Which of the servants best describes you? Why?

**Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment: Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (read Matthew 25:31–46)**

23. Who are the sheep? Who are the goats? (see verses 35, 36, 41–43)

24. What is the basis of the separation and the eternal destination of the sheep and the goats? (see verses 40, 45)

25. Who are “the least of these, Jesus’ brothers”? (see Matthew 12:46–50)

26. Why were the brothers of Jesus suffering lack of food, drink, clothing and were strangers, sick and in prison? (see Matthew 24:9–13)

27. Why were the sheep and the goats unaware of when they were showing kindness to Jesus?



3. What does it mean to be devoted to Christ's Church? Are you? Why?

4. What does it mean to be devoted to Christ's mission? Would you say you are? Why?

5. Are you a true disciple of Jesus? Why?

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6. How are you sharing the gospel?

7. With whom are you sharing the gospel?

8. Are you discovering “people of peace”?

9. How are you making disciples of those who believe?











**J**esus made disciples and told His disciples to do likewise: “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20). Thus, beginning with the Day of Pentecost, baptized believers devoted themselves to “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). A discipleship exposition of the Gospel of Matthew, *Making and Multiplying Disciples* describes what the apostles taught—what Christ had taught and commanded them to obey which is summarized in the five major teaching sections beginning with the Sermon on the Mount. Apparently Matthew intended his gospel as a training manual to instruct believers in all Christ had commanded—the original discipleship manual in making and multiplying disciples...of all nations..

In this study guide, *Making and Multiplying Disciples*, John walks through the Gospel of Matthew detailing why the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations is the logical conclusion to the teaching of Christ recorded throughout the book. It is not simply tacked on at the end, but rather the last words of Christ on earth sum up His consistent message. It is clear that biblically speaking there can be no such thing as “non-discipleship Christianity.” To be a Christian is to be a disciple and to be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker. That is what will actually foster a movement—discipleship, which is what we have been called to do from the beginning.

Ed Stetzer - President, LifeWay Research, Nashville, TN

John Amstutz has provided the Great Commission community with a valuable new resource in world evangelization and discipleship. Biblically speaking, success and fruitfulness in evangelism should not be measured by decisions counted but by disciples made. *Making and Multiplying Disciples* is a solid and practical guide for missions agencies, training programs, and local churches as they seek to be obedient to the final and foremost command of our Lord, “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Grant McClung - President, Missions Resource Group, Cleveland, TN

John Amstutz has caught the very heart of the Master in *Making and Multiplying Disciples*. This study guide is more than another book on disciple-making. It is an action plan. It is the answer to Jesus’ final instruction in Matthew 28:19, “Go and make disciples of all nations...” The time is now and the resource is here. This study guide steers us towards the Master’s plan of making and multiplying disciples.

Wayne Cordeiro - Pastor, New Hope Christian Fellowship, Honolulu, HI

Dr. John Amstutz has done it again...another masterpiece on discipleship. His first book, *Disciples of All Nations*, clearly outlined from the book of Acts the infinitely reproducible four-stage process that spawned national church planting people movements. In this work John describes the “first discipling manual” of the early Church in making and multiplying disciples. Understanding the Master’s plan of discipleship will help you to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

Jerry Dirmann - Pastor, The Rock Church, Anaheim, CA

Section-by-section, Amstutz walks us commentary-style through the major teaching passages of the Gospel of Matthew, laying emphasis on the running theme of discipleship throughout. Groups can use the discussion questions in the Study Guide to dive deeper into the text, exploring what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Bob Logan - Executive Director, CoachNet International Ministries, Los Angeles, CA



**Dr. John L. Amstutz** is consultant for Foursquare missions. He has served as a missionary, pastor, professor, educator and leadership trainer for churches in the U.S. and overseas. He is the author of the missions textbook, *Disciples of All Nations*, as well as numerous missions articles. He received his B.A. from Pasadena College (now Point Loma University) and his M.Div., Th.M. and D. Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is married to Dorene and has four children, ten grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Editorial  
**RENUUEVO**

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