



TRULY FOLLOWING JESUS

What does it mean to truly follow Jesus? What is Jesus' true invitation for us in following Him? What are His expectations for us? What is His part and what is my part in this partnership? What are the costs? What are the rewards? I want to take a fresh look at the invitation of Jesus for us today in 2024 to truly, fully, and wholly accept this invitation from Jesus to truly follow Him in Discipleship.

Luke 9:23-26 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.*

I. DISCIPLESHIP IN JESUS' GENERATION

- A. *Who are you following? Everybody is following somebody. Put another way: We're all disciples. The question isn't, "Are you a disciple?" but, "Who or what are you a disciple of?" (John Mark Comer)*
- B. *It was common for the first century Jewish male to find a Rabbi they wanted to follow and apprentice under for a season of their young life. Once they decided who to apprentice and learn under, they made the request in hopes of being accepted into the apprenticeship. Not all requests were granted.*
- C. *What is a Disciple? When Jesus said go and make disciples, it was a Jew speaking to other Jews in a Semitic dialect. As such, those words had a very specific meaning and embodied a well-known paradigm that first-century Jewish listeners well understood. Since then, those words have been translated into Greek, and then into Latin, before being translated into the constraints of the English language more than a thousand years later. To more fully understand what Jesus said, we first need to disconnect from our traditional Hellenistic understanding of those words - easier said than done - and then ask how the Jews who first heard those words would have understood them. Only then are we in a position to ask what might those words mean for our discipling efforts today. (Bible.org)*
- D. *Jesus was breaking the mold by offering an apprenticeship to all who would come and follow Him. This included male and female, rich and poor. "If ANYONE desires to come after me..."*
- E. *"Jesus' method of discipleship was relational, intentional, and holistic. He invested more than three years (26,280 hours) nurturing the spiritual growth and development of 12 disciples." (Core Discipleship Resources)*
- F. *"Surprisingly, there was nothing mysterious about men leaving their businesses and families for days, weeks, or months to journey with a rabbi who roamed the countryside, teaching. Yeshua was one of hundreds of first-century rabbis who roamed the countryside, each with his band of disciples. The Jewish society nurtured and celebrated discipleship." (Sharper Iron Studies)*
- G. *It is fascinating to note that Christ' most frequent audience was His Disciples. Of course, He spoke in public often to allow others to receive His Kingdom but primarily He focused on the spiritual formation of His Disciples so that in time, they too would be released to go and make disciples in like manner.*
- H. *Observe how we develop board certified surgeons, nurses, licensed electricians, schoolteachers, biochemists, counselors, and golf pros today. Common to each are long periods of study, training, mentoring, practical experience, as well as continuing education. We are accustomed to the practice of placing ourselves under the watchful mentoring oversight of others who have established proficiency in*



our areas of interest. Ironically, we seem to put far more passion, commitment, and dedication into becoming a disciple of someone, or some thing, than we seem to do in developing and nurturing our piety as committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, we are all disciples of some thing or someone - be it hedonism, atheism, career, self-absorption, materialism, our favorite cause, or Jesus Christ. (Bible.org)

- I. Here are a few the key expressions of Jesus' Discipleship model from His ministry:
 - a. **Relational/Familial Discipleship:** We see how Jesus built personal relationships with His disciples. He spent time with them, ate with them, traveled with them, and engaged in conversations with them. Through these life-interactions, Jesus got to know them closely and demonstrated care and concern for their well-being.
 - i. **Matthew 12:48-50** *'But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'*
 - b. **Instructional Discipleship:** We see how Jesus taught His disciples through both formal instruction and informal conversations, using parables, sermons, and direct teachings to convey spiritual truths and principles. Jesus' teachings covered many cultural and eternal issues, including the Kingdom of God, love, forgiveness, servanthood, and the process of disciple-becoming and disciple-making itself.
 - i. **Matthew 13:11** *'And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.'*
 - ii. **Matthew 7:21** *' "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.'*
 - c. **Modeled Discipleship:** We see that Jesus didn't just teach His disciples information. He also lived out the principles He taught. His decisions, attitudes, and responses to others served as a model and template for His disciples to emulate. Jesus' life embodied His message, both in His living and in His dying.
 - i. **John 13:15** *'For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.'*
 - d. **Re-directional/Correctional Discipleship:** Jesus was such a patient and loving Rabbi-Mentor as He corrected His disciples when they misrepresented or misinterpreted His teachings. He provided guidance and encouragement as needed, helping them to mature in their faith and understanding.
 - e. **Intercessory Discipleship:** We see how Jesus prayed for His disciples regularly in His discipling, asking God to guide them, strengthen them, and empower them by His Spirit.
 - i. **John 17:9** *'I (Jesus) am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are Yours.'*
 - f. **Transformational Discipleship:** Jesus invited His closest of Disciples into encounter His weighty glory and beauty. These Disciples were invited into becoming more like Jesus by behold more of Jesus; Discipleship through behold or "We will become like that which we behold."
 - i. **Luke 9:35** *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!"*
 - g. **Missional Discipleship:** We also see how Jesus prepared His disciples for sending them out on mission to put into practice everything that they were learning from Him. He empowered them to preach, teach, heal the sick, cast out demons, make disciples, and perform other acts of ministry. These experiences allowed the disciples to put their faith into action.



- i. **Matthew 10:1, 5** *'And Jesus called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. These twelve Jesus sent out...'*
- h. **Multiplication of Discipleship:** Ultimately, we see how Jesus emphasized the culmination of His apprenticeship with His disciples by telling them that they were to now go and make disciples of others where He would send them to. They were to teach others all that Jesus had taught them, instructing them to follow and obey Jesus in the same manner. Jesus then instructs them to wait for the Father's promised Holy Spirit of power to fulfill this new life-long assignment.
 - i. **Matthew 28:19-20** *"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"*
 - ii. **Acts 1:4,8** *'And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

II. BECOMING DISCIPLES OF JESUS IN 2024

- A. **Luke 9:23-26** *Then Jesus said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*
- B. There is a great price for deciding to follow Jesus. The price and cost of NOT following Jesus is even greater though. The highest and greatest rewards and joy that the human heart can experience on this side of eternity to discovered and found in intentionally *"Being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing as Jesus did (Comer)"*. This is the place of abiding in Jesus, entering into the joy of His labor, and bearing much fruit that Jesus taught about in His earthly ministry.
- C. **If Anyone Desires to Come After Me-** Jesus was expanding His discipleship and apprenticeship to "whosoever". This was unheard of in His time.
- D. **Deny Self-** As it was true in Jesus' day, it is true for us today. As we say yes to Jesus's apprenticeship, He says it is a surrendering of our own life, will, future, dreams, etc. It is also a laying down of our pain, past hurts, sin, disappointments, etc. We are called to relinquish our rights to Jesus authority.
- E. **Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*
- F. Our self-denial does not produce our personal salvation but is simply our heart response in following Jesus' example of self-surrender to the Father.
- G. **Take Up His Cross-** Jesus wanted to make it clear that to follow Him in His life included to be willing to follow Him in His death, in required.
- H. *"Jesus spoke these words, everybody knew what Jesus meant. In the Roman world, before a man died on a cross, he had to carry his cross (or at least the horizontal beam of the cross) to the place of execution."* (**Blue letter Commentary**)
- I. *"When the Romans crucified a criminal, they didn't just hang them on a cross. They first hung a cross on him."* (**David Guzik Commentary**)
- J. Let us pay attention to Jesus' choice of words, *"Take up YOUR cross..."*



- K. Luke 14:26-33 *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple "*
- L. **Follow Jesus**- What does it look like for me to follow Jesus? I should consider how He speaks and what He says. I should observe how He interacts with different people and circumstances. I should listen to how He prays and speaks to His Heavenly Father. Does Jesus cry and for what reasons? How does Jesus respond to His enemies who oppose Him? How does Jesus treat His family?
- M. This invitation to "Follow Jesus" is not just to observe Him but to seek to copy and emulate Him. With this as a biblical measure, are there any areas in your life and practices in your routine that don't reflect the Person of Jesus?
- N. Ultimately, making disciples is about following the example of Jesus Christ, who invested in the lives of His followers, teaching them, empowering them, and sending them out to continue His mission. It requires love, patience, humility, and a commitment to walking alongside others as they grow in their relationship with God.
- O. *The central issue of being a disciple of Jesus is: Will I willingly surrender – submit for a lifetime - every aspect of my life, including worldview, paradigms, career, personality, character, ethics, desires, motivations, values, family, ego, sexuality and attitudes to the authority of Jesus and His teachings?*
(Bible.org)