

The Spiritual Habits of Jesus Series

Jesus' Habit of Disciple Making

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus' Habit of Disciple Making

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Coaching—why does every sport have one?

1. Growing up, I was always heavily involved in sports. I got involved with football, baseball, wrestling, hockey, and track. When I got old enough, I eventually had to scale back to three sports, as I could only participate in one sport per season. Most of my athletic years were spent doing football, wrestling, and baseball.
2. By far, my favorite sport was football. The most time-consuming sport I participated in was wrestling. However, in baseball, I noticed a large difference between good coaches from not so good coaches—I experienced both. I had been playing baseball for years and was very familiar with how practices went. I participated in several different try outs and made the highest rated traveling teams. But, out of all my years of baseball, there is a coach that stands out in my mind as the most effective and helpful baseball coach I've ever had.
3. My freshman year of high school, I had a baseball coach for the school team who loved the game and was passionate about helping other people understand baseball and become a better player. Instead of being a coach that got us organized to just go through the motions of the typical drills, this coach taught us how baseball worked and how to practice better so we would improve our skills in the game. I had never experienced a coach who had the knowledge and capability to do this before.
4. He taught me certain hitting drills that would develop specific aspects of my hitting and why those areas were important. He explained how to play different positions in the field more effectively. He communicated what the goal was in various situations and how best to accomplish it. He also increased my ability to more productively run the bases based on different scenarios that would be faced during the game. I became a much better baseball player in the one year I had this coach than in the previous five years with my past coaches. I was able to use what I was taught by this coach throughout the rest of my playing days.
5. On the other side, the last baseball coach I had didn't give me many opportunities to play, despite the fact that I had always played with all the starters and I was still one of the best players and should have been starting (this is not being said in pride, but as a reality). This coach even intentionally discouraged me from playing in several ways. I got the impression he didn't want to put me into games, even when I performed well when he did. He didn't try to help at all, he simply found reasons to criticize. I never had a coach in any sport like him before or since.

- B. Why are coaches so important to sports? Because they universally improve the performance of athletes, and we know this. This is why professional teams are willing to spend millions of dollars on coaches. Athletes need help. They require the eyes and attention of objective observers who know the sport and will help guide them. Athletes are almost always better off with a coach than without one. They are certainly always better off with a good coach.

- C. The coaching dynamic is also relevant for the spiritual life. Individuals always do better with a passionate and knowledgeable guide. If a person takes their pursuit of God seriously, they will welcome and desire a spiritual “coach”. Jesus promoted these types of people, although He referred to them as disciples who make disciples (or as some call them, disciplers). Knowledgeable individuals who know how to live the Christian life effectively are desperately needed in the church.
- D. Jesus spent much of His time and effort being a spiritual coach in the lives of others. He also trained others to become spiritual coaches themselves. Making disciples is significantly important to Jesus, so much so that He commanded those who follow His way of life to do it as well. Jesus commands His people to be spiritual coaches in Matthew 28:19-20.

II. Command to Make Disciples

- A. While this command is probably familiar to a lot of people because it is a strong point of emphasis in the Alliance, it is still important to cover this familiar territory by way of reminder. We even spent an entire series on this topic, so we will only highlight a few details.¹ The central task given to the church, by Jesus, is to make disciples,
 - ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
(Mt. 28:19-20)
- B. “Go therefore and make disciples” (v. 19) is the command. The church of Jesus is to be intentionally focused and proactive. Why do we go? Because Jesus has ultimate authority over our world and everything else (v. 18). What do we do? We make disciples (v. 19). The church learns how to make disciples from Jesus Himself. He showed us what to do and how to do it.
- C. There is no limitation as to the geographical location of this command (“of all the nations” v. 19). Those who are following Jesus will never run out of people to disciple. There is an entire world of just over 8 billion people.² That’s a lot of opportunity for disciple making. This is enough responsibility to keep us busy for our entire lives.
- D. Making disciples is never crossed off of our “to do” list. Jesus points out that this task of making disciples will take us to the end of time (“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” v. 20). The church will never retire from the disciple making business. While an individual may reach a point where they are physically or mentally unable to continue making disciples, the church never does. This job is passed from generation to generation in the church. This is a job given to us by the King, whom we love, that will keep us busy until this world passes out of existence. Jesus intends this task to be permanent.
- E. What is a disciple? A disciple is one called by Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9), into a loving relationship with Jesus (Mt. 22:37), for the purpose of becoming like Jesus (Rm. 8:29), while on mission with Jesus (2 Cor. 5:18-20).³ Each element of this definition is significant. While detailed, this

¹ See the sermon series by Andy Davis titled The Great Commission in which each phrase of this passage was explained.

² [World Population Clock: 8.1 Billion People \(LIVE, 2024\) - Worldometer \(worldometers.info\)](https://www.worldometers.info/world-population-clock/)

³ This excellent definition of a disciple comes from Church Planting Basics training put on by Todd Sovine and the Central Region of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. I was introduced to this definition through the Disciple Making Discipleship training by Doug Jarred from the Western Great Lakes District of the CMA.

definition captures all the important elements of being a disciple as taught in the Bible. This definition informs us of who a Christian is.

- F. Regarding the first part (one called by Jesus), a disciple is a person who has been deeply impacted by Jesus. Jesus is the One who initiates and invites us into the journey of spiritual life. Jesus invites us into His kingdom and does the work that makes it possible for us to respond to His invitation. From start to finish, salvation and life transformation is ultimately a work of God. As human beings, we respond to His initiatives.
- G. Second (into a loving relationship with Jesus): Disciples have an ongoing connection and experience with Jesus that is unique to those who have been given the Spirit of God. Jesus reveals Himself to disciples, and they truly know Him as they grow in their accurate understanding of Jesus. Jesus loves disciples, and disciples love Jesus in return.
- H. Third (for the purpose of becoming like Jesus): The natural effect of such a relationship with Jesus is that individuals are transformed and become like Jesus on the inside. If a person is not increasingly becoming more like Jesus, they do not have a genuine relationship with Him, even if they think they do. There will be spiritual growth and fruit. The whole reason for the relationship is to become a person who is like Jesus.⁴
- I. Finally, a person will be growing spiritually “while on mission with Jesus”. Those who have a real relationship with Jesus will personally participate in what He is doing on earth. Disciples do what Jesus did. They live a life of service to Him out of appreciation for what Jesus has done for them. Disciples will eventually put what they know of Jesus into action and have a spiritual impact on others as a result.
- J. Disciple making is built on two previous habits discussed in this series: building relationships and communicating God’s message. If both habits function in our lives, we will naturally be making disciples. The more organized and strategic our plan is for those whom we are discipling, the larger our impact will be.
- K. We are developing resources that will help you put this command into action. Our goal is to put tools in your hands that are easy to use and will guide you through making disciples for Jesus. The job of the leadership of this church is to prepare, equip, and train you to be able to do what Jesus tells us to do (Eph. 4:11-13).
- L. We plan to do this through what we are calling “Disciple Making Bible Studies.” These Bible studies will help guide your conversations and interactions with others so that you can learn how to make disciples. These studies will walk you step by step through an effective disciple making plan as you partner with others to move them through the four stages of discipleship: Expose, Educate, Equip, and Engage.
- M. These resources are intended to be practical and usable. All of the organizing and decision making about what to cover with your disciple is already done for you. You can simply follow the plan. These studies are designed to be “grab and go” with minimal prep work so that you can disciple others even amid busy schedules. While you will want to develop your own answers to the questions, each lesson provides the Scriptures and questions that will guide

your conversations with others in a way that moves people forward in the Christian life. Investing one hour each week in one person can help you make disciples for Jesus.

III. Jesus' Habit of Disciple Making

- A. From the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, He intentionally built relationships with a small group of people so that He could guide them through a process of spiritual growth. These relationships were formed for the purpose of transformation and developing individuals who were equipped and prepared to carry out Jesus' work on earth. This critical idea of disciple making is found in a short, but very significant verse: ⁴“¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’” (Mk. 1:17).⁵ Jesus shared His life with specifically selected people so that they could be with Him to influence them and to eventually send them out into the world to spread His message. This is discipleship. Discipleship involves a certain type of intentional relationship that moves people through spiritual development stages, resulting in transformation of person. These ongoing relationships are intended to be not merely informational but transformational. The goal is not just to teach individuals the Bible, but to help them learn how to let the Bible dwell in them (Col. 3:16).
- B. Jesus helped His disciples understand God, His work in the world, and His message—convictions. On one such occasion, Jesus was trying to help His disciples understand the true nature of the Christian life by clearing up the inaccurate source of information they grew up depending on:
- ⁶ And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷ They began to discuss *this* among themselves, saying, “*He said that because we did not bring any bread.*” ⁸ But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets *full* you picked up? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets *full* you picked up? ¹¹ How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Mt. 16:6-12)
- C. As Jesus is traveling by boat with His disciples (Mt. 16:5), He took the opportunity to help them understand a more accurate perspective about the type of life that is pleasing to God. The disciples already had a lot of ideas about what they thought this meant. Jesus is pointing out to them that their source of information about God was not a good one. This is why Jesus gives the disciples a warning: “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (v. 6). To put this comment in perspective, it is as if Jesus is saying, “watch out for the teachings of your pastor or your religion professor;” this would have been very surprising to the disciples. The disciples would have naturally trusted their religious leaders as reliable sources of information about God. However, Jesus has a different perspective.

⁵ Mark 3:14

- D. It took the disciples a while to figure out what Jesus was talking about (including more assistance from Jesus) because their thoughts were still primarily focused on the concerns of the world. But they eventually got it (“Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” v. 12). Jesus wasn’t concerned about carbs, but he was concerned about convictions. Jesus specifically identified false religious teachers (and their teachings) and warned the disciples to stay away from them.
- E. Why did Jesus do this? So that the disciples would be able to learn how to identify good sources of accurate information about God from bad ones. Jesus wanted His disciples to have correct and informed ideas about God. Jesus cares about what the disciples think. All spiritual transformation starts in the mind. If people have wrong views, they will live more sinful lives. The more informed a person is, the better the chance and the greater the potential for godly living. As Paul said, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rm. 12:2). If disciples believe false teachings, they will not develop into the people God wants them to be. Jesus knows this and wants the disciples to draw spiritual nourishment from good Biblical teaching.
- F. For Jesus, discipleship is more than just having an accurately informed mind. Jesus isn’t trying to create a group of smart people who know the Bible well. Jesus wants to create a group of people who live the way God desires them to live so that He can use them for His purposes in this world. This is why Jesus gave disciples what they needed for their personal spiritual growth: character.
- G. Jesus met His disciples right where they were, in the middle of day-to-day situations. In one example, Jesus points out the wrong priorities, values, and heart motivations of the disciples and explains to them how their character needs to change so they can please God:
- ²⁴ And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ ²⁶ But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves. (Lk. 22:24-27)
- H. The disciples are still operating with a world-focused heart as their attention was directed toward “which one of them was regarded to be the greatest” (v. 24). They were concerned with status, position, and authority. The disciples were in competition with one another to be the best. Their priorities still centered around themselves and their own interests. Jesus takes notice of this and confronts this problematic character head on: “the Gentiles lord it over them...But it is not this way with you” (vv. 24-25). Jesus reminds the disciples of their spiritual identity and their obligation to be different from those who do not know God. While other people operate according to the priorities of this world, the disciples are to be different.
- I. There is a different standard and perspective for disciples: “the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant” (v. 26). Jesus provides the disciples with the way status works in the kingdom of God, and it is the exact opposite of the

way of the world. Jesus provides the disciples an alternative standard and priority as He encourages them to transform their character.

- J. Jesus points to an example of what He means in His own life: “I am among you as the one who serves” (v. 27). Jesus didn’t just explain and point to God centered character; He demonstrated it. Jesus tells the disciples to live the way He is living and do what He is doing. In all this, Jesus meets the disciples where they are and encourages them to take productive steps forward in their Christian life as He deals with their character.
- K. Jesus makes disciples by helping others develop God-focused convictions along with character. He also promotes conduct that pleases God. Jesus trained His disciples to carry out His mission—conduct. Jesus wants His disciples to act in specific ways,
- ¹ Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. ² And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³ Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves... ⁸ Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’” (Lk. 10:1-11)
- L. Disciple making has a very practical end game: “the Lord...sent them in pairs” (v. 1), “I send you out” (v. 3), and “say to them” (v. 9). Jesus made disciples so that they could take His message to the world and make more disciples for Him. While the context of this passage is unique to the time of Jesus, the principle is universal. Jesus made disciples to raise up a group of people who would join Him in His work on earth and continue this work after He left earth.
- M. Jesus helps His disciples understand the spiritual perspective of their work: “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (v. 2). Jesus is talking in spiritual terms here. There are people who will hear about Jesus and respond properly to His message. Once people respond, they can be developed so they, too, can join the work God is doing on earth. Jesus is also realistic about the difficult nature of this spiritual work: “Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves” (v. 3). While there is a lot of spiritual opportunity, there is also much spiritual opposition. Disciples doing God’s work need to have a realistic perspective.
- N. In this training, Jesus prepared His disciples to effectively carry out specific actions and ministry skills. Jesus gave them practical training on what to do. Notice how He says, “whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you” (v. 8). If a welcoming response happens, do your work there. Jesus even gets into the logistics about how His disciples will eat. He continues, “heal those who are sick” (v. 9) and “say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (v. 9). Jesus gives specifics regarding what they are to do and say.⁶

⁶ It appears this group of 70 also has been given special abilities by Jesus, like the apostles, to heal others (and presumably to cast out demons as well). This is a special ability not granted to all disciples today.

- O. If the disciples get a different response (“they do not receive you” v. 9), Jesus offers a different course of action: “go out into its streets” (v. 10) “and say...’be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.” (v. 11). The course of action is different based on the response of the people and the message. While very similar, it is slightly altered. Jesus’ instructions are very practical and situational based on what these disciples will experience in their service of Jesus. While these instructions are unique to this group during this stage of Jesus’ ministry, there are some features that overlap with what we are instructed to do today.
- P. We can make disciples today in the same manner that Jesus made disciples two thousand years ago by working to help people develop their convictions, character, and conduct to those of Jesus. Effective discipleship involves all three elements. Shaping people in these areas of life is why the church exists. Disciple making is the job of the church given to it by its boss (Eph. 1:22, 4:15, 5:23, 1 Cor. 11:3, Col. 2:10, Mt. 28:18) and owner (Ac. 20:28, Rm. 8:9, 1 Cor. 3:23, Gal. 3:29, 5:24, Rev. 5:9). Making disciples is the greatest and most important adventure of our lives. Those who are part of God’s kingdom will actively and personally participate in Jesus’ mission on earth.
- Q. If we focus too heavily on one area or another, we will short circuit the disciple making process. Each component of convictions, character, and conduct is necessary for people to grow spiritually at a steady and healthy pace while moving toward spiritual maturity. Each element is necessary if we are going to see life transformation in others. The discipleship process doesn’t have any shortcuts. If a person only focuses on doing loving acts for others without trying to develop Biblically informed convictions, they will never reach full maturity or a robust Christian life. If a person focuses exclusively on study the Bible and theology but neglects godly character, they will become obnoxious and self-righteous know-it-all’s. To be spiritually healthy, a person needs growth in each of these areas of life.
- R. Finding this healthy balance will take some work as the church typically focuses most, if not all, its attention and energy on teaching—convictions. It is important for us as a church to learn how to devote more time and attention to the development of both godly character and Jesus centered conduct. As Jesus said, we are to make disciples by “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). Biblical instruction leads to obedience and application to life; not just passing along information. Much of what Jesus commanded requires godly character to obey it. Even the most important command, “love the Lord your God” (Mt. 22:37), requires a specific type of character. As we make disciples, our goal is to transform other people’s convictions, character, and conduct, just as Jesus did.

IV. Review

- A. In this series, we identified thirteen habits that are a summary of the Christian life. In these habits, we are presented with an overall picture of what an authentic Christian life is. To live a genuine Christian life, these habits need to become a regular and ongoing part of a person’s regular life rhythms and day to day activities:
1. Solitude—regularly spending time alone with God
 2. Prayer—frequently talking to God

3. Seeking the Father—an inner disposition that desires a connection and closeness with God
 4. Bible study—consistently learn more about God and how He wants us to live
 5. Meditation—repeatedly thinking about God and spiritual topics
 6. Faith—an attitude of deep trust and strong confidence in God’s reliability
 7. Personal worship—praising, honoring, and obeying God as an individual
 8. Worship with others—living in community with other disciples with a God focus
 9. Building relationships—developing ongoing connections with others for kingdom purposes
 10. Serving others—devoting time and attention to the interests and well-being of others
 11. Communicating God’s perspective—naturally talking about life from a Biblically informed viewpoint
 12. Evangelism—explaining Jesus’ importance to those who don’t know Him
 13. Disciple making—intentionally investing in others to move them to maturity in the Christian life
- B. While it might be intimidating and overwhelming to look at this list of habits, taken together, the reality of transformation and spiritual growth is that personal change takes time. It happens slowly, small step by small step. The Christian life is a lifelong process of becoming like Jesus, and this is by God’s design. Don’t get frustrated or discouraged. Keep at it, using the resources, strength, and tools God provides.
- C. Here is a helpful strategy for your personal growth plan. Pick one habit from this list and focus on it until it becomes a regular part of your life as you continually rely on God for help. It should be developed to the point that it becomes second nature. You can grow to the point that you participate in the habit without having to think about it—the habit becomes part of who you are. Once this happens, move on to another habit. Add the second habit to the first one, without neglecting either. Repeat this process until the whole list is an active and regular part of your normal, everyday life. By the end, your life will be drastically transformed.
- D. This process will take time, intentionality, and sacrifice, but it is worth it. The transformation of our life is God’s primary desire for each of us: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). It is not easy. We need to learn how to live differently with the influence of Jesus. Remember what we are chasing: the quality of life that Jesus Himself lived. A meaningful life lived for that which matters most is worth the pain, sacrifice, and heartache required to achieve a life well lived. God greatly and generously rewards this type of effort.

V. Conclusion

- A. Jesus intentionally built strategic relationships with others for the purpose of raising up workers for the kingdom of God. In this, Jesus partnered with others for their spiritual benefit as Jesus guided them through a process of spiritual growth and training. In doing this, Jesus invested much time and effort.
- B. Why do we spend so much time looking at Jesus and His life from all different angles at Community Alliance Church? Because we know that focusing our mental attention on Jesus is an important element of transformation (“¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a

mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” 2 Cor. 3:18). As we behold Jesus as the glory of God, we are transformed by what we see according to the working and power of the Holy Spirit. Contact with Jesus changes us for the better.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Have you ever tried to disciple another person? If so, what was your experience like?
- B. What can we learn about discipleship from Jesus in John 14:1-11?
- C. Describe the discipleship process in your own words. Where does it start? How does a person move through it? Where does it lead to?
- D. If you were going to begin discipling another person, what would you need?
- E. If you were going to be prepared to disciple others in the future, what would be your next step?