

April 26/27, 2025

Who is a Disciple?
Everyday Disciples Series
Selected Scriptures
Pastor Bryan Clark

Last week, Ryan talked to us from Romans chapter 5 about what Paul calls the “**Much More Life**,” that Jesus hasn't simply offered us a ticket to heaven, but so *much more*. But here's the deal. In order to enter in and experience the **much more life**, you need to be a disciple of Jesus. So, here's my obvious question: “Do you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus?” That's what we want to talk about this morning.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to Matthew, Chapter 28. This week we start a six-week series called “Everyday Disciples”. We're going to look at some of the most practical areas of our life, some of them rather sensitive, and talk about what does it look like to be a disciple of Jesus in these very practical areas? But before we do that, it's good to start the series with making sure we're clear. “Who is a disciple?” At the end of Matthew's Gospel, at the end of chapter 28, he offers what's often referred to as *The Great Commission*. I would say it's the marching orders for His Church. This is who we are as the people of God; this is what we're called to. Picking it up in verse 18, Jesus says:

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

Grammatically, the command is not **Go**. The command is: **Make disciples**. It could be translated “while going,” make disciples. The going is assumed, and this is what we're supposed to be doing. If those are our marching orders as Christians, it does seem rather important that we're clear on what a disciple is. He offers two things: Make disciples, **baptizing them**. I would simply refer to that as *conversion*. What I mean by that is, it's not that baptism saves, but when someone trusts Jesus as Savior, baptism is the public identification, the public testimony of that. So, step one in the process is for people to come to know Jesus as Savior. Frankly, if you cannot publicly testify to Jesus as Savior, you stand no chance of being a disciple. So that's step one.

Step two: ...**teaching them**. Teaching them what? **Teaching them to observe all that I've commanded**. To understand that phrase, you really have to understand the concept of discipleship in a 1st century culture. So, discipleship was not new. It was not exclusively Christian. It was a concept that was well understood by people in the 1st century. So, for example, the philosophers had disciples. We know from the Gospels, the Pharisees had disciples. John the Baptist had disciples. The rabbis had disciples. Jesus had disciples. This was a very familiar concept to them.

The word itself means something like a student or a learner, but I think that's misleading. It's not referring to someone who shows up in a classroom a couple of times a week and learns something from the teacher. It was far more holistic than that. The concept of being a student or a learner was that you became a follower of the teacher. You lived with him; you ate with him; you traveled with him; you did life with him. It was all about getting to know him and becoming more like him. It was learning his beliefs, his world view, his ways, his practices, his disciplines, and how he treated people. It was a holistic education to become more like the teacher. It was also understood that once the teacher died, it was the responsibility of the disciple to continue to put forth this belief system—these ways, these practices—everything they had been taught by the teacher. That was the role of the disciple. It was very comprehensive. Then go back to what Jesus said, **...teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.** That's what it means to be a disciple.

You see examples of this all over in the Gospels. For example, turn with me to Luke, chapter 5. Luke chapter 5 is a very familiar story. It's the calling of Peter, James, and John. They've been out in their boat all night, but didn't catch fish. Jesus shows up, tells him to cast the net over the other side of the boat, and the net is full of fish, Peter figures out this is no ordinary guy. And then Jesus responds in Luke 5, verse 10:

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

(This is the call, and verse 11 is the verse I want to focus on.)

When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

(You see it again later in the chapter, in verse 27.)

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." (That's the call. What does he do?) Verse 28:

And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him.

We read that and that seems really strange to us. But for someone in the 1st century who understood what it meant to be a disciple, it wasn't strange. This is what it meant to be a disciple. So, what does it mean for us today? Are we supposed to leave our houses...our families...our jobs...and our businesses? And the answer is, "Of course not!" What it does mean is that if you're going to be a disciple of Jesus, you have to be "all in". Everything else is secondary to following Jesus. "I want to know Him; I want to learn from Him; I'm going to conform my beliefs to His beliefs, to His ways, to His practices, to His way of doing life." And, ultimately, the goal is, "to be more like Him."

Now, I want you to just stop and think about this for a minute. Think about where we are as a 21st century culture, especially a Christian culture. We've reached a point where many people who identify themselves as Christians believe it's too much to ask to even attend church. And I want you to think about that in relation to what Jesus was calling His disciples to. He was calling them to leave everything behind and follow Him. What He was saying is, "If you're going to follow me, you need to be "all in". "

So, think of it this way. Let's imagine that for many years I was single, but at some point, I decided I wanted to get married. So, on the day I get married, my spouse has expectations. We are now beginning a new life together, a new journey together, which is going to be all inclusive. It's all holistic. It's like this is our life together now. But I decide I don't want to live like I'm married. I would like to be married, but I want to live like I'm still single. I would like to still date around a bit; I would like to do my own thing. I would like to live an independent life. I'd like to make my own money and spend my own money. I want to live as if I'm single even though I'm married. How do you think that's going to work out? If you're going to take seriously this marriage, you have to be "all in". This is our new life together. We're committed to each other. This is a completely new way of life. It's the only way you're going to find a life and love that your soul is searching for. In marriage, this is required to experience the "Much More" married life.

The most miserable Christians I know are Christians who want to be "married" but live like they're still single. "I want a ticket to heaven, and I want to show up and dabble in Jesus every now and then. But mostly I'd like to live like I'm still single." That's just not going to work. Jesus, again and again, addressed the crowds that followed Him. Jesus had become very popular. People liked the miracles; they liked the show. They liked to listen to Him. But soon He began telling them, "If you're going to follow Me, this is what that means."

So, for example, in Matthew, Chapter 13... I don't like to normally do this, but we have a limited amount of time and several passages I want to share, so we're going to throw them up on the screen here. This is Matthew 13. Jesus is explaining the Parable of the Sower. What I want you to listen for as I read through this is: There are four soils. Soil number one is the person who wants to remain single. Soils number two and three are those who want to be married but still live as if they're single. And only soil four is the one who's willing to say, "I'm all in!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy (I want to get married.); yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises (...when the marriage gets hard.) because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (*Matthew 13:18-23)

This was a familiar message of Jesus. "If you're going to follow me, this is what it means." We see it again in Mark's Gospel, chapter 4. Again, you have to appreciate that Jesus has huge crowds. They like the show. They like the miracles. They like to listen to Him. But in this passage, Jesus is

explaining to them, “If you're going to follow Me, this is what I expect.” “If we're going to be married, this is what I expect.”

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will...(*find the ‘much more’ life...my little edit, there*).

(*Mark 8:34-35)

Jesus says, “Listen, if we're going to be married, if you're going to be My disciple, if you're going to follow Me, this is what I expect from you!”

So what does it mean to *deny ourselves*? It doesn't mean to deny ourselves the longings of our soul, the desires, the things that are in our heart. If we start going down that path, we just return to asceticism, which we talked about in our study of 1st Timothy...*the false teaching of the day*. It's not what He's saying. It doesn't mean you deny your personality, who you are and your talents and your gifts...what God has called them. It doesn't mean that. What it does mean is that you are giving up your right to run the show. You're not in charge anymore. It means you're not going to be the “God” of your own life. It was clearly understood in the 1st century that the teacher is now in charge. The teacher is going to teach me how to live. The teacher is going to teach me my beliefs, my world view, and show me how to treat people. I now am going to do everything I can to be like the teacher. That's what it means to *deny yourself*. This is no longer about me and my selfish ambition. It's about Jesus and a willingness to submit and surrender myself to Him. It's to be “all in”.

As a matter of fact, I think He helps clarify *deny yourself* with that phrase, *to take up your cross... carry your own cross*. There's a lot of confusion around that. It's very important to understand that at this point in the Gospels, Jesus has not gone to the cross yet. That would not have been what they would have understood Him to be saying. It was understood in a 1st century Roman culture that when someone was to be executed, they were to carry the cross beam of the cross to the place of execution. And they did so through the city streets. The message was clear to everyone. Rome is in charge. Rome has the authority, and you all are in submission to the authority of Rome. So to take up a cross, is to submit ourselves to the authority of the teacher. He's the teacher. He's the master. It's His job to teach us, to show us how to live. So now think back to the Great Commission, “...teaching them to observe everything I've commanded”. That's what Jesus was saying. Let's go on to Mark; there's one more thing I'd like to cover.

“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me (that's Jesus talking) and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (*Mark 8:36-38)

The part of that I want to dial in on is this idea of being *ashamed of Jesus*. I'm going to suggest to you that there are many people in our country today that identify themselves as Christians that are ashamed of Jesus—who He is and what He taught—because it's so out of step with the morality of the culture. So that's expressed in trying to give Jesus an image makeover. “No, Jesus, you can't say that. That can't be true. Jesus, we need to help You. We need to do some damage control. We need to figure out how to make You more acceptable in our culture.” We do that because we're ashamed of Him and we're trying to fix Him. What happens is, instead of being a disciple who's supposed to be the learner and listening to what Jesus has to say, the disciple is trying to be the teacher and trying to change and reimage Jesus in our own image, to make Him more acceptable in our culture. It just doesn't work that way. He's the Teacher! He's the Master! It's His life...it's His words...it's His truth...it's His morality. He's teaching *us*. When Jesus was in the Upper Room with His disciples, hours before being arrested and going to the cross, He had some very intense conversations with them. This one we find in John, chapter 15. It's pretty straightforward.

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (*John 15:18-19)

That's pretty clear. Jesus is saying to His disciples, “You've got to understand. If you're going to follow Me, the world hated Me; the world is going to hate you. If you were of the world, you would fit in; the world wouldn't hate you. But Jesus has called His disciples out of the world to be like Him. This isn't hyperbole. This is hours before Jesus is going to be tortured and executed. They did hate Him. They were about to kill Him. And He was saying to these disciples, “It's going to be the same for you!” Again, this isn't hyperbole. Minus Judas, every one of those men that was in that Upper Room, ultimately would die for the cause of Christ, except probably John. They hated Jesus. They're going to hate them, and they put them to death for it...for being a disciple of Jesus. So right before the message, we sang the song, “Wherever you lead me, whatever it costs me, I will follow you.” It's pretty easy to sing, but not so easy to commit to. In John chapter 14, again in the Upper Room, things are pretty intense; it's pretty clear. Jesus said,

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (*John 14:15)

If you're going to be my disciple, if we're going to be married, this is my expectation...*keeping all that I have commanded*. “You have to listen to Me. You have to obey Me if you're going to be My disciple.”

John 3:16 is probably the most familiar verse in the Bible. But it's interesting. We know the verse, but sometimes we don't notice what Jesus continues to say in that paragraph. John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through

Him. (That's beautiful. We love that. But he goes on.) **He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.** (*John 3:16-21)

Jesus identified Himself, ***“I am the Light of the world.”*** But what happens when the Light of the world enters into a culture of darkness? The Light shines into the darkness and exposes the evil, and people don't like that. Their way of dealing with the Light was to execute Jesus to put the Light out, because people don't like having their stuff exposed. But Jesus also said to His disciples, “You are salt and light.” Just by following Jesus, just by listening to Jesus, just by obeying Jesus, just by seeking to live like Jesus, you're going to be a light in the darkness. You are going to expose the sin, and unrighteousness, and evil around you, and you have to understand people don't like that. But that is what you're signing up for.

Years ago, when I was convinced God was calling me to be a preacher of His Word, to be faithful to that calling, I accepted the fact there's going to be a lot of people that won't like what I have to say and, consequently, won't like me. I understood that; that's what I'm signing up for. I'm “all in”. But it isn't just the preacher. If you're going to be a disciple, that is what you're signing up for: “I'm going to follow Him; I'm going to listen to Him; I'm going to obey Him; I'm going to walk in His ways. And as you live righteously, that light is going to expose the evil around you. Don't expect that to be received with great joy. Why were people so intent in the 1st century on persecuting the Christians? Why, in a 21st century America that's becoming more and more secular, is there a growing hostility towards Christians and Christ? The answer is because the Light of Jesus exposes the darkness, and people don't like it. If you're going to be a disciple of Jesus, that is what you're signing up for. James was a half-brother of Jesus and was known for being pretty blunt. This Scripture seems pretty blunt to me. Notice the language, **You adulteresses**. In other words, “You're married to Jesus, but you're living like you're still single.”

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (*James 4:4)

That's pretty clear. One more: I John, chapter 2, verse 15, where John says:

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This is a text we've looked at over and over again over the years. You can't have two lovers; you just can't. You can't be married to Jesus and still live like you're single. That's just not going to

work. If you're going to be a disciple of Jesus, you have to decide to be “all in”. *He's the Teacher. He's the Master. I want to know Him. I want to listen to Him. I want to learn from Him. I want to walk in His ways. I want to be like Him.*

Over the next five weeks, we're going to talk about some very practical areas of life, some of them rather sensitive. And here's the deal. If we're going to be serious about being disciples of Jesus, we're not interested in what your opinion is about these topics, not interested in what my opinion is, not interested in what Ryan's opinion is. We're very interested in what Jesus has to say, what God has to say about these topics, with the understanding: He's the teacher; I'm the learner, and I'm going to submit myself to what God has to say, and trust that that's ultimately where I'm going to find the **Much More Life**.

Our Father, we're thankful for the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that gives us new life. But we're also rather sobered at what it actually means to be Your disciple. Lord, I pray that we would choose to be faithful to that calling, that we would be a light in a culture of darkness, that we would choose to go “all in” in this beautiful marriage, this beautiful love relationship with Jesus. Lord, this we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
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SPRING 2025 // WEEK 4

Life Group Questions

Everyday Disciples // April 26/27, 2025

Who is a Disciple? // Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 5:11, 27-28, John 15:18-27, 3:16-21, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15

Introduction

This is the first week of our new "Everyday Disciples" sermon series, where we will discuss what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Bryan spoke about why discipleship is important, what it means for somebody to devote their lives to that path, and the life-changing impact that it can have.

EVERYDAY DISCIPLES

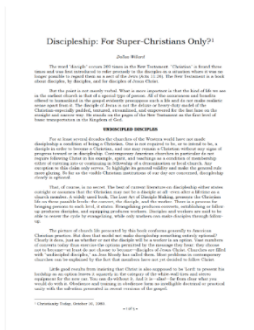
Following Jesus in the 21st Century

lincolnberean

In addition to the sermon and these discussion questions, LBC is recommending resources each week that you could look at if you want to dig further into this topic. After the sermon each weekend, you can find links to these resources on our website. Here are the resources for the first week of this new series: www.lincolnberean.org/everydaydisciples

Who is a disciple?

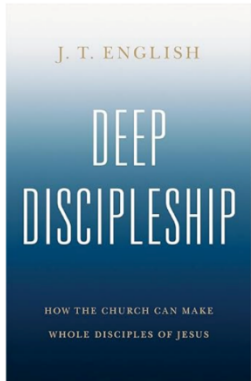
Everyone is a disciple of something or someone, so who or what are we following?



"Discipleship: For Super-Christians Only?" Article Dallas Willard Article Link



not a fan. Kyle Idleman Amazon Link



Deep Discipleship J.T. English Amazon Link

We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you to cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What was/is your favorite subject in school, and why?

- 2) If you could ask any celebrity or historical figure (living or dead) to teach you how to master one skill, who would it be, and what would you ask them to teach you?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

1. **What are some details about discipleship that you remember from Bryan's sermon, or from the scripture passages that he covered?**

2. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus delivers a set of instructions to His followers traditionally known as the Great Commission, including the commandment to "make disciples of all the nations." **What does this tell us about why discipleship is important?**

3. Read Mark 8:34-38. **In your own words, based on the descriptions in the Bible, what does it mean to truly be a disciple of Jesus?**

Next, turn to Luke chapter 5 and read verses 1-11 and 27-28, which describe the experiences of some of the disciples of Jesus joining His ministry for the first time. **What do these verses tell us is the cost of being a disciple of Jesus?**

4. Now, take a look at the following passages: John 15:18-19, John 17:13-21, James 4:4, and 1 John 2:15. **What do these passages say about how followers of Jesus should view the world around them?**

How do these passages help us understand the importance of standing apart from the world as disciples of Christ, but also be a loving presence to the people we interact with?

What are a few opportunities in your own life where God might be calling you to intentionally be a loving presence to those around you?

5. **Do you consider yourself to be a disciple? Why or why not?**

Do you consider yourself to be a disciple-maker? Why or why not?

In order to be the best disciple that you can be, do you think it's necessary to be a disciple-maker? Why or why not?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: We explored a lot of different scripture from all around the New Testament this week. As you take what you've learned into your everyday life, consider just one verse from Jesus' teaching: Mark 8:35, *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."* Think about what is at stake when committing to being a disciple of Christ and ask yourself if that is something you're ready for in your life. Take some time to listen to the Holy Spirit and journal your thoughts.

Prayer Focus: This week, engage with the Lord in a prayer of gratitude for your faith journey, considering the priceless value of having companions with whom you can pursue a sanctified life as the original disciples did. Whether it's your Life Group, your friends or family, a mentor in the church, or anyone else that God has brought into your life to join in following Him, pray for them by name and ask God to be the enduring cornerstone of your relationship with them.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?