

## 2022 ... A Year of Discipleship

### Introduction

As the people of God we are called to be disciples. We know from the Bible that Jesus called disciples. This was a break with Jewish tradition. Normally, a potential disciple would seek out a rabbi to follow. Jesus, however, sought out His own disciples, and they came from all facets of life. He chose fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, and John). He chose tax collectors (Matthew). He chose political extremists (Simon the Zealot). He chose skeptics (Nathaniel and Thomas). He even chose the one who would eventually betray Him (Judas Iscariot). You can imagine the possibilities for strife and conflict as this group of men traveled from one end of Israel to the other, through Samaria ... and even into Gentile lands. Yet, through the teaching that Jesus gave to His disciples; the opportunities to engage in ministry Jesus provided; and just the time to observe Jesus as He had compassion on the people; these men were transformed into the first generation of proclaimers of the Gospel, the Good News, and through them the Church grew and began to flourish.

Yet, being a disciple is loaded with meaning. To be a disciple is to be placed under a discipline. This may sound strange; so often we think of discipline as something punitive. Even in the church the only time we hear about discipline is when someone has stepped out of line and away from the teachings of the Scriptures. We speak of “church discipline” which has some difficult end results. When thinking of discipline as punitive, no one wants to be “under discipline.”

The discipline of the disciple, especially the disciple of Jesus, isn't punitive. Quite to the contrary, discipline is to be instructive; to teach the one who follows Jesus what it means to follow Jesus.

1. Read Matthew 16:24 and Matthew 10:38. What do these two passages say about following Jesus?

Jesus did call the Twelve to follow Him and they immediately became His disciples. The same is true for us. Jesus calls us into His family of faith and forgiveness in the waters of Baptism. Baptism is a sacrament; an action commanded by Christ which uses physical elements and works or imparts the forgiveness of sins into the lives of those who receive it. As a sacrament, Baptism is God acting in our lives and not any way dependent on human assent.

2. Read Isaiah 43:1b and John 15:16. What do these two passages say about God's action in our lives?

We become disciples of Jesus immediately upon entrance into His family through the waters of Baptism. Additionally, there are no “degrees” or “levels” of discipleship. As Jesus taught His disciples, there were opportunities for the disciples to learn more about what following Jesus meant. Jesus sent the Twelve out to engage in ministry (Matthew 12:5).

Then Jesus sent out the 70 (Luke 10:1, 17). Jesus not only taught the disciples but He also gave them opportunities to engage in ministry; teaching, healing, casting out demons, etc. Sometimes the disciples were successful; other times, they were not. We are fully disciples upon receiving Christ as Lord, but we're never guaranteed to be successful disciples.

The life of the disciple is marked by living by a discipline; a way to walk. In this case, a way to walk with Jesus. The call to the disciple from Jesus is "Follow Me." As we follow Jesus, as we imitate Him and His ways, there will be moments of success and moments of failure. If we stumble in our discipleship, we get back up and continue to follow.

3. Read James 3:2. What does our Lord's brother say about stumbling?

The importance of placing ourselves under this discipline is to curb our words and actions so that they will be more like Christ and will make it possible for Jesus to shine in our lives.

4. Read Matthew 5:13-16. What does it mean that disciples are called to be salt and light in the world?

Over the course of the next twelve months, we will take the time to examine a bit more in-depth an area of spiritual discipline.

Spiritual disciplines examined will be:

- Daily Bible reading
- Fasting
- Solitude
- Prayer
- Service
- Outreach
- Rest
- Worship
- Friendship
- Generosity
- Celebration

This will include a Bible study on the discipline, ideally, a Sunday message, and a congregational activity. All in the congregation are invited and encouraged to engage in "2022 – A Year of Discipleship." As you study and learn, it is our prayer that the Holy Spirit strengthen your walk with the Lord Jesus as you follow Him.