

Men's Workshop
Being a Disciple

Definition: “A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.”

– Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 24.

Discussion

Identify key words or phrases in the definition above, and state their meaning in your own words:

What questions or issues does this definition of discipleship raise for you?

Define “Disciple” in your own words:

Bible Study

Read Luke 9:18-27

What is the setting for Jesus’ call to discipleship?

Key Verses: ²³Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.’” (NIV)

What does it mean to “deny” one’s self?

In Jesus’ day, what would, “take up his cross daily” have communicated?

Jesus’ original twelve disciples literally “followed” him over the Galilean and Judean countryside. What might it mean to “follow” him today?

Share an example from your experience where you attempted to “save” your life.

What does it mean for us to “lose” our life for Jesus? Why does “losing” one’s life for Jesus actually “save” it?

Application

How can you put these verses into practice into your life this week? (Share one of your applications within your small group & pray for one another accordingly)

In your thoughts/ attitudes/values	
In your lifestyle	
In your marriage/ family life	
In your career	
With your talents/gifts	

For Further Thought/Discussion

Reading:

The following reading is excerpted from "Demands My All," by Darrell Johnson, in Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 27-30.

“Life is difficult.” That is the way M. Scott Peck begins his very helpful book *The Road Less Traveled*.

Most people do not see this truth. Most people believe that life should be easy. The road most traveled is the road of moaning and grumbling about life’s difficulties. The road less traveled is the road of accepting life’s difficulties and meeting them head-on.

What Peck says about life in general is even more true about life with Jesus Christ. Discipleship is difficult. Following Jesus Christ is costly. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus made it clear that living with him meant walking a road less traveled. “Enter through the narrow gate,” he said, “for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Jesus promises to give anyone who will follow him abundant life (John 10:10), but he makes it very clear from the beginning that to follow him is difficult and costly. He calls us to follow him on the road less traveled.

Jesus’ True Identity

Mark 8:27-35 may be the hardest of the hard sayings of Jesus. Jesus and his disciples were traveling through the villages around Caesarea Philippi, a city north of the Sea of Galilee... In Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say I am?” After receiving various answers, Jesus then asked the disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter, speaking for the Twelve, said, “You are the Christ” (v. 29; Matthew 16:16).

Jesus accepted their answer, but he immediately began to fill those terms—Messiah and Son of God—with unexpected meaning. “The Son of Man,” Jesus’ favorite way of referring to himself, “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (v. 31). Jesus knew he *must* leave Caesarea Philippi and make his way to Jerusalem. And he knew that in Jerusalem he *must* suffer. And not only suffer but be rejected. And not only be rejected but be killed, crucified. And then be raised...

Jesus’ Difficult Road Less Traveled

...Jesus walked and taught the road less traveled, the road that leads to Easter but that goes through the cross. There are all kinds of forks in the road offering another way, a way around the cross, but each of them eventually ends in a cul-de-sac. There is only one road to life. This road ends on the other side of the empty tomb, and we don’t get there except through the cross.

Jesus gave this hard saying not only to his disciples but also to the multitudes. William Barclay rightly observed, “No one could ever say that he was induced to follow Jesus by false pretenses. Jesus never tried to bribe men by the offer of an easy way.” Jesus was up-front with any would-be follower: “If anyone would follow me—and I hope that you will because I can give life abundantly—this is what you are in for” (see Mark 8:34-35)

Notice he uses the word *if*. That *if* reflects Jesus' acknowledging our freedom to choose. A certain rich man heard Jesus' call to discipleship, and he walked away (Mark 10:17-22). He heard what he was in for and judged it too costly. Mark tells us that Jesus looked at the man and loved him (v. 21), still knowing what his choice would be. But Jesus did not run after him or change the terms of the call. Jesus said, "Estimate the cost" (Luke 14:28). "You call Me Messiah, Christ. You wish to follow Me? If so, you should realize quite clearly where I am going, and understand that by following Me, you will be going there too."

Jesus uses three vivid phrases to describe the road less traveled: deny yourself, take up your cross, and lose your life for my sake...

Accepting the Challenge

What are some of the signs that we have not yet met Jesus' challenge head-on? The signs abound in churches today and manifest themselves as jealousy—not having what others have; competition—trying to achieve more than the next person; argumentative spirits—needing to have our own way; oversensitivity—becoming resentful when not recognized for our work or wanting it to be noticed that we've lost it all for Christ. We believe that we deserve the things we have—the nice homes and new cars. We plan our future without reference to the kingdom of God and spend the resources we have to improve our own kingdom. We use the gifts of God to advance our own name, our own reputation.

But "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" (John 12:24). The road to Easter goes through Good Friday. The road to new life goes through the death of the old. The road to resurrection goes through crucifixion. Jesus calls us to walk that road, the road he walked.

Reflection/Discussion

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement from Peck: "Life is difficult... Once we truly see this truth, we transcend it"? Why?

Do you think Jesus' "terms" for being his follower are different today than when he walked this earth? Why or why not?

The reading concludes by identifying some signs that we have not met Jesus' radical claims head-on. Which of these are issues for you?

How can Christian men today help each other to travel "the road less traveled"? Be specific.