

# discipleship essentials

## Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study Guide

### EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Exploring Discipleship. This series of lessons studies the spiritual formation of a follower of Jesus Christ – the process referred to as discipleship. The discipleship process occurs after someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, beginning with a desire to live out God’s plan for their life. When we undertake the task of helping a new believer to grow in their faith, we are said to disciple them. This material will benefit anyone wanting to disciple others, especially those who are practising evangelism, following up with new believers and helping them grow in their faith. Discipleship is the duty of every believer, especially those in spiritual leadership!

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).



# EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

## LESSON 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to explore what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. When we begin to disciple others, it is good for us to evaluate our own life.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Engaging in discipleship requires a clear understanding of the characteristics of a disciple. A disciple is a follower or adherent of Jesus and the way of life and faith He demonstrated to us. You can think of someone who commits themselves to following a master in any arena of life – they are a disciple. It is important to understand that calling oneself a believer in Jesus and attending Church or Bible Study is only the beginning. The true mark of a disciple is their willingness to deny self and put God and His ways first. Being a disciple requires sacrifice and a commitment to lifelong learning. There should be a change in life. We cannot be a disciple of Jesus and have our life, actions, and priorities remain the same! The Gospel is good news and may, for some, be relatively easy to accept, but becoming a disciple is hard work. But nothing that is worth much in our life comes without some kind of cost!

## GETTING STARTED

1. What have you chosen to give up in order to attain something better? Was it a difficult choice? Does it seem as difficult looking back?

2. How are Christians different from disciples of other gurus or religions?



## STUDY

❖ **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE:** A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who has accepted Him as their Saviour and then spends their entire life in pursuit of being like Him at any cost. It requires believing who Jesus is, learning what He taught, and agreeing to do what He asks of us.

- **Disciples are Learners:** The Greek word for 'disciple' is '*mathetes*,' which means 'learner.' Disciples are those with a heart for God and a teachable attitude. Disciples are ready to receive whatever Jesus has to offer; His forgiveness, love, direction and commands. Learning from Jesus is a lifelong process.
- What does the Bible tell us about this task of being a 'learner'? Read [Matthew 11:28-30](#), and [Philippians 3:12-14](#).

- **Disciples are in the process of becoming like their Master:** While we will never be perfect, God does call us to grow in our likeness to Jesus Christ. When fully trained, disciples become more like their Master. Disciples of Jesus increasingly reflect His character, conduct and passions. What do the following verses tell us about becoming more like our master? Read [Luke 6:40](#) and [Ephesians 4:13](#).

❖ **SOME ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCIPLES OF JESUS:** As we prepare to disciple others, we should evaluate our own lives. Are we true disciples of Jesus Christ? Even though imperfect, are we prepared to be a good example to others?

- **Disciples of Jesus are growing in their love for God and others:** The aspiration, pursuit and commitment of disciples is to love God with their entire being. To love God is to submit our entire life to Him. We do this not out of obligation, but in response to His great love for us.

Read [Matthew 22:36-40](#). What does God call us to do as a disciple? What are the commands?



God calls us to love Him with our whole heart, and others as ourselves. These two commands are the foundation of the Christian life.

What are some ways we can assess how we are doing in relation to these two commands? If you were successful in those two areas of your life, how would your life be different?

- **Disciples of Jesus submit to Christ as Lord of their lives:** The pursuit of God's Kingdom demands our single-minded commitment. Even the legitimate desire to serve our family must be submitted to Jesus' call to be His disciple. The more we know Jesus, the more we will know who God is. The more we meditate on what Jesus has done for us, the more we will serve Him out of thankful hearts. Therefore, to be a true disciple of Christ, we must submit the following to His Lordship .

**Read Luke 14:25-33.** What areas of our life must come under the control of Jesus? (Give examples).

In order to submit to the Lordship of Jesus, our relationships (Luke 14:26), our possessions (Luke 14:33) and our whole being (Luke 14:26-27) must put Christ first.

- **Disciples of Jesus seek the kingdom of God.** Before any other purpose in their life, a disciple will seek to promote God's Kingdom and glory, not their own or the world's.

Read Luke 9:57-62. What were some of the things people wanted to do before they followed Jesus? In your life today – what are some things people want to do before they follow Jesus? Why would Jesus not permit them to do as they pleased before they chose to follow Him?

- **Disciples of Jesus are internally motivated to follow and serve God:** Our love for Jesus should motivate us to be more like Him and walk in His ways.



Read Romans 5:6-8, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Hebrews 12:28-29, 1 Corinthians 15:58. What do they tell you about the motivation of a disciple?

- ❖ **Evaluating Your Commitment to being a Disciple of Jesus:** We should each regularly evaluate our commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are times in our life when we might make slower progress or even allow old sins and habits to return. Being honest with our mentor or accountability partner will keep sin from growing greater in the dark.

### IN SUMMARY

- ❖ A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who has accepted Him as their Saviour and then spends their entire life in pursuit of being like Him at any cost
- ❖ Disciples are learners and disciples are in the process of becoming like their Masters.
- ❖ Disciples of Jesus are growing in their love for God and others.
- ❖ Disciples of Jesus submit to Christ as Lord of their lives
- ❖ Disciples of Jesus seek the Kingdom of God
- ❖ Disciples of Jesus are internally motivated to follow and serve God.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Becoming like Jesus Christ doesn't happen overnight – it is truly the mission of a lifetime! In what ways are you currently growing in your Christlikeness? What is God teaching you?

2. What picture of Jesus Christ do non-believers see when they observe you? Can you think of things in your life that need a lot more work, and areas where you have already seen good changes?