

# Traits of the Disciple of Jesus



## Last Words Are Sometimes Lasting Words

Consider some of the last words of Jesus: “... *make disciples of all nations...*” (Matthew 28:19).

If you were asked to define what Jesus meant by *disciple*, could you? Could you list the Traits of a true disciple of Jesus? Have you ever been discipled by or have you personally discipled another?

Whatever your answers, this booklet has been designed for anyone who desires to become discipled, more like Jesus. Jesus said, “*A disciple...who is fully trained will be like his teacher*” (Luke 6:40).

## God’s Story

In his book *Counterfeit Gospels*, Trevin Wax, explains the Bible story (God’s story) as follows:

### **Creation:**

One Hebrew word sums up the picture of Genesis 1 and 2: *shalom*. Peace. Earth was full of God's shalom, the kind of peace in which everything works according to God's intention. The world was made for human flourishing; there we could live in joy in the presence of our Maker, worshiping God by loving Him and one another forever.

### **Fall:**

Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them. We refer to their rebellious choice as "the fall," and because they represented all of humanity, their action affects us too. We have— through our attitudes and actions— declared ourselves to be God's enemies. This rebellion results in physical and spiritual death.

### **Redemption:**

Thankfully, the loving Creator who rightly shows Himself to be wrathful toward our sin is determined to turn the evil and suffering we have caused into good that will be to His ultimate glory, so the next movement shows God implementing a master plan for redeeming His world and rescuing fallen sinners. In the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself comes to renew the world and restore His people. The grand narrative of Scripture climaxes with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **Restoration:**

The story doesn't end with redemption. God has promised to renew the whole of creation, and the Bible gives us a peak into this glorious future. The restoration of all things will take place in two ways: Christ will return to judge sin and evil, and He will usher in righteousness and peace. God will purge this world of evil once and for all.

Everyone has a story. As you prepare for your journey into the Traits of a Disciple, will you write a one page story about yourself on the next page?

## My Story

My early life and studies...

My early concept of God...

When and how I began to follow Jesus, if before now...

How Jesus has affected my life...

Where I am today and what I hope to gain along this journey of discipleship...

Before beginning Trait #1, in preparation for the next meeting, read Matthew 4:18-25 and John 20:19-23. Memorize John 13:15 and John 20:21

## Traits of the Disciple of Jesus

1. **Follows Jesus** – John 20:21
  - Sent as He was sent.
2. **Loves God Back** – Matthew 22:37
  - With all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.
3. **Loves Others Unselfishly** – John 13:34,35
  - As Jesus loves us.
4. **Loves His Neighbor as Himself** – Matthew 22:38,39
  - Seeks the least and lost (Matthew 25:40, Luke 19:10).
5. **Lives in the Spirit** – John 7:37-39
  - Yields to, walks and is filled with the Spirit.
6. **Abides in and Obeys His Word** – John 8:31, 15:8
  - Bears much fruit.
7. **Prays the Jesus Way** – Matthew 6:9-13
  - That His Kingdom might come.
8. **Denies Self** – Luke 9:23,24
  - Puts Jesus above self, others, and things. (Luke 14:26,27,33)



## Trait #1: Learning to Follow Jesus (To be sent as He was sent.)

What does someone have to possess or do in order to get people to follow? Think back through your life. Whom have you followed...where and why? Who has followed you...where and why?

In Matthew 28:19, the Greek word used by Jesus is *“mathetes,”* a word meaning *“learner, pupil, student, apprentice, or follower.”* ***“Therefore, go and make disciples – learners, pupils, students, apprentices, followers of Jesus – in all nations.”***

All disciples of Jesus are sent ones. In John 20:21, Jesus tells us, ***“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*** Just as He was sent by His Father into this world to do the work of the Father, so we are sent by Jesus into this world to continue His work.

### Principle:

*“If I am to become a disciple like Jesus — sent as He was sent — I must first become a learner. I learn in the process of following Him.”*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

John 13:15; John 20:21

### Key Passages:

John 20:19-23; Matthew 4:18-25

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages below and respond to the questions. Consider the following questions and Scripture. As you do, note discoveries you make in the passages about how you can be like Jesus.

John 13:14,15

What did Jesus do and then ask of His disciples?

Luke 6:40

What does Jesus say is the goal of the disciple?

Luke 19:1-10

In this passage, why did Jesus say He had come to earth?

Mark 10:35-45

In this passage, why did Jesus say He had come to earth?

Matthew 28:18-20

What did Jesus ask of His disciples?

John 13:34,35

More than twelve centuries earlier, God had said, "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (Leviticus 19:18). Why do you think Jesus called this a "*new*" commandment?

Matthew 11:29

From these words, what does Jesus want us to learn about Him?

Matthew 18:1-4

What is it about a child that Jesus wants us to see?

What does it take to enter the Kingdom of God?

John 20:19-21

What was the significance of this moment in the lives of the disciples?

What was Jesus' message to them?

In Summary:

In the passages before, we learned that the end result of Jesus' teaching is *to be like Him* (Luke 6:40). And *to be sent as He was sent* (John 20:21):

- As He served, I am to serve (Mark 10:45).
- As He sought the lost, I am to seek the lost (Luke 19:10).
- As He made disciples, I am to make disciples (Matthew 28:19).
- As He loved others, I am to love others (John 13:34, 35).
- As He was humble and gentle, I am to be humble and gentle (Matthew 11:29).
- As a little child trusts its parents with humble, total dependency, I am, likewise, to trust Jesus (Matthew 18:1-4).

Take a few minutes to ponder the statements above and the insights you gained as well.

Application:

Use this space to write down where you currently stand in each of these six areas. For example:

Which descriptions of a disciple do you find most difficult?

Which ones seem to be easier?

Record any questions you have or prayers that come to mind as you move forward on this discipleship journey.

Action Step:

This is one action step you are willing to take today to follow Jesus as He followed His Father:

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Optional Prayer:

Write the following prayer on a 3x5 card or put it on your mobile phone to carry with you during the week. Pray it often:

*"Lord Jesus, reign in me as Lord. Live your life in me. Show me how I might better serve as you served, seek the lost as you did, make disciples as you made disciples, love as you loved and be humble and gentle as you were, through your Holy Spirit, I pray. Amen."*

Before Your Next Meeting:

Read Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 7:36-50. Review John 13:15 and John 20:21. Memorize Matthew 22:37. Work on memorizing these verses word-for-word.

Share with a supportive friend what you learned in this lesson. What will help you take your action step? What will help you continue following Jesus' example?



## Trait #2: Learning to Love God Back ( With all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.)

Why would Jesus say there is one commandment that is more important than others?  
Why would Jesus say that all other commandments are dependent upon the first commandment?  
What did Jesus mean that there was a second commandment like it?

These questions form the basis for our second lesson: Learning to Love God Back.

In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis said: *"A person's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God."*

### Principle:

*"If I am to become a disciple like Jesus, I must learn to love God back. I learn first by understanding how much God loves me."*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

Matthew 22:37

### Key Passages:

Read the following as an overview for this lesson: Matthew 22:34–40 and Luke 7:36-50

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages and respond to the questions.

#### Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Read this passage at least 3 times and record your observations about the passage, including what the passage teaches about loving God and teaching our children.

#### John 14:31

What does Jesus want the world to know about His relationship with His Father?

I John 4:8-10

What is the source of all love?

How did God manifest His love?

How does the sacrifice of Jesus affect my understanding of His love?

Luke 7:36-50

Describe this scene from different points of view. For example:

What did Jesus see?

What did Simon see?

What did the woman see?

What did those around the table see?

Why was Simon so bothered by the woman's presence?

What do you see in this woman and in her act of washing Jesus' feet?

What do you believe led this woman to have such radical love for Jesus?

Matthew 22:34-40

Write out the first and greatest commandment.

Write out the second commandment.

Why do you think Jesus said the whole Law and Prophets hang on these?

In Summary:

In the passages above, we learn that our love for God is proportionate to our understanding of God's love for each one of us, His children. By meditating upon Jesus, His character and His sacrifice on the cross, we can more fully understand the cost He paid for our forgiveness. Simon loved little because he did not comprehend how much Jesus loved him.

Jesus taught there was no greater vocation in life than being a lover of God. This was His mission... *"The world must know that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me."* (John 14:31).

Personal Reflections:

Take a few minutes to reflect on the passages above and those that follow. *"We love, because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19). Paul wrote to his friends and fellow followers of Jesus in the city of Ephesus: *"I bow my knees before the Father...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."* (Ephesians 4:14,17-19).

Application:

Write how you feel about your current comprehension of God's love for you.

Action Step:

What is one specific way you can demonstrate loving God back today?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Meeting:

Before the next lesson, review and meditate upon John 13:15, 20:21, and Matthew 22:37. Meditate often upon the passages throughout the day. Consider using your travel time for review and memorization. Another good time for review is just before going to sleep or upon awaking.

Read John 13:1-17, 34-35; Memorize John 13:34- 35.

Share with a supportive friend about how you did with last week's step.

Write down what you learned as you were focusing on taking this step. What will help you continue to take this step and continue following Jesus' example?

### Trait #3 – Learning to Love Others Unselfishly ( As Jesus loves us.)

Without an understanding of Jesus and His unending love for His disciples, we all fall short of fulfilling Jesus' new commandment to love one another as He loved us. As disciples, we are mandated to *love as He loved*.

This is *the* distinguishing mark of a true follower of Jesus.

You will note as you read John 13 below that Jesus gave special importance to teaching His first disciples to love one another. Paul also emphasizes a similar importance when he wrote "*Let us do good for all people, especially the household of faith.*" (Galatians 6:10).

I learn by opening my heart to God's love. I learn by observing how Jesus loved. And I learn by allowing Him to reign in me and help me love.

#### Principle:

*"If neighbors, who do not know Jesus here or abroad are to see God's love, I must love them and others unselfishly."*

#### Memory Verses:

John 13:34,35

#### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

#### Key Passage:

John 13:1-17, 33-35

#### Scripture Responses:

Read the following passages and respond to the questions.

John 13:1-17

From this passage how do you see Jesus demonstrating love for His disciples?

John 13:12-17

Why do you think the disciples called Jesus "*teacher*" and "*Lord*?"

Jesus said that He gave the disciples an example to follow. What was that example?

What do you think He was teaching them in verses 15 and 16?

Ponder verse 17. What result can we expect from loving others as Jesus loved?

John 13:34,35

Do you think the new commandment stated in these two verses supersedes the great commandment? Why or why not?

Paraphrase John 13:34,35 in your own words.

How have the words you chose above change how you love others?

What is the proof that you are true disciple of Jesus?

Jesus raises the bar on what it means to love. What words best define how His disciples are to love?

Ephesians 5:1,2

What do I think it means to “walk” or “live” a life of love?

In what way(s) did Jesus demonstrate His love?

I John 3:16; 4:11,19

What is the basis for loving others unselfishly?

In Summary:

In the Scriptures above we see how Jesus loved others by washing His friends' feet. We may not need to literally wash someone else's feet but we can *serve* them. Loving others unselfishly in the manner in which He loved is *not a suggestion* for a disciple of Jesus. We are to love others unselfishly because *He loves us willingly, unconditionally, and sacrificially*.

Application:

Reflect on the passages and write about the quality or depth of your love for others. Be ruthlessly honest. Ask yourself, *"Is there someone in my life I do not love as Jesus loves me?"* Are you willing to pray for that person and yourself, that you might have a greater capacity to *"love one another as He has loved you"*?

Action Step:

*What is one specific action you can take to love a brother or sister of Jesus unselfishly today?*

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Lesson:

Carry the verses from Traits #1-3 with you this coming week.

Remember when Moses gave Joshua instructions which would lead to success? He said: *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) True prosperity and success (by God's definition of prosperity and success) stems from "meditating on His Word 'day and night' and doing 'all that is written in it.'"

Read Luke 10:25-37 and Matthew 25:31-46.

Memorize Matthew 22:38,39. Review and meditate on its meaning.

Before the next lesson, share with a supportive friend how you did with last week's step.

Write out what was difficult for you in this step.

What will help you continue following Jesus' example in the step above?



## Trait # 4: Learning to Love My Neighbor As Myself

(Seeks the least and lost.)

In this lesson, we learn more fully what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. We will learn *who* our neighbors actually are and what it means to be a good neighbor.

Though a king, Jesus gave up the comfort of His throne to reach out both to *the lost* and *the least*.

He taught and modeled what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves.

### Principle:

*"If I am to become a Jesus-like disciple , I must learn to love my neighbor as myself. I learn by understanding how Jesus loved."*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

Matthew 22:38-39

### Key Passages:

Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages and respond to the questions.

Luke 10:25-37

What question was Jesus asked that moved Him to tell this story?

Who or what do you think the different people in the story represent?

Why do you think the Levite and priest passed by the suffering man but the Samaritan stopped?

What sacrifices did the Samaritan make in order to love the beaten man?

Did Jesus answer the lawyer's question? Explain.

What does Jesus want His disciples to "*be*?"

John 4:3-26

What did Jesus offer the Samaritan woman?

What steps did Jesus take in their discussion to help her see her deeper need?

Who did Jesus claim to be?

How did Jesus show His love for this woman?

Matthew 25:31-46

In this passage, what are the six ways "*sheep*" distinguish themselves?

Why did the goats fail?

Why do you think the sheep were oblivious to what they had done?

If Jesus returned today and separated the sheep from the goats, are you absolutely sure you'd be with the sheep? Does your life demonstrate tangible care for "*the least*?"

If you are uncertain, what are you willing to do to take a step to becoming more certain?

In Summary:

We love our neighbors by *being* a neighbor of loving compassion. Jesus taught His disciples to *"be merciful (compassionate) as your Father in Heaven is merciful"* (Luke 6:36).

He wants us to exhibit the kind of love that compels us to go out of our way to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors.

Application:

We learned in Trait #3 that *"we love, because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). In this lesson we learn that loving our neighbors as ourselves is the second part of the greatest of God's commandments (Matthew 22:37-39).

Who are your present neighbors – not necessarily those living physically next door, but those God is bringing into your sphere of influence?

In what way do you, right now, actively love your neighbor?

Action Step:

What is one specific way you can love your neighbor today?

Do you have one of the "least of these" in your life that You need to reach out to? If no one comes to mind, refer back to the group of six Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25:35-45.

Write down the person's name here:

What specific action are you willing to take to love your neighbor?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Meeting:

Read John 14:15 through John 16:15. Memorize John 7:37-39.

Review previous Traits and verses; carry them with you during the week. Meditate upon them frequently during the day and just before you go to sleep and when you awake in the morning. Ask Jesus to reign in your life and live His life through you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask him to shape you more into His likeness.

Share with a supportive friend about how you did with last week's step.

Write out what was difficult for you in this step.

Do you feel that the step you took last week will remain part of your life?

What will help you continue following Jesus' example in the step above?

## Trait #5: Learning to Live in the Spirit (Yields to, walks and is filled with the Spirit.)

The Prophet Zechariah proclaimed, *"This is the Word of the Lord... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts'"* (Zechariah 4:6).

The Holy Spirit is a Person, one with the Father and Son. He is called the *"Paraclete"* – the Greek word for *"one who comes alongside."* He is the Comforter. He is the Source of Power for the child of God. Like a mountain guide, the Holy Spirit leads us through the winding path of life. In this lesson we catch a glimpse of who He is, why He has come, how to be filled with and walk in the Spirit.

### Principle:

*"If I am to become a Jesus-like disciple, I must learn to live in the Spirit. I learn first by observing how Jesus lived in the Spirit."*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Key Passage:

Read the following as an overview for this lesson.  
John 14:15-16:15

### Memory Verses:

John 7:37-39

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages and respond to the questions.

Matt. 4:1, 18, 19

When Jesus began his ministry, He was tempted in the wilderness. Who did He rely upon?

What significance does this have to His followers today?

2 Cor 3:17-18

By what process are followers of Jesus transformed into His likeness?

John 14:15-17

How, specifically, did Jesus introduce the Holy Spirit to the disciples?

John 14:26, 15:26,27

What work does the Holy Spirit perform in these three verses?

John 16:7-11

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit is the one who *convicts*. Who does He convict and of what?

John 16:13-15

What specific things does Jesus teach here about the person and the work of the Holy Spirit?

Acts 1:8

What purposes did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would fulfill when He came upon those first disciples?

Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-10

Note how and where these early followers were led to go and what they were instructed to do. What relevance do these passages have for us today?

Gal 5:16-23

List the nine specific character traits of those who live in the Spirit?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

Romans 8:9

Can you be a true follower of Jesus without the Holy Spirit dwelling in you?

Eph. 5:18

What are followers of Jesus commanded to do?

Why do you think Paul compares being filled with the Spirit to being drunk with wine?

John 7:37-39

Who did Jesus invite to come to Him?

What did Jesus promise to those who believe in Him?

How did Jesus describe the Holy Spirit and why do you think He used that illustration?

Revelation 2:7, 11, 17; 3:6, 13, 22

In these verses, what is Jesus saying and what relevance does His message have to you today?

### Personal Reflection:

In the Scriptures above we see a glimpse of what Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit.

The disciples did not fully understand, until 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead, that they were to live by the power of the Spirit. As disciples of Jesus, we are privileged to have the Holy Spirit indwell us. And when He is at work in our lives, we see evidence and fruit of His presence.

Jesus modeled for His followers how to live in the Spirit. Two words exemplified his life: ***reliance*** and ***obedience***.

To experience the power and fruits of the Holy Spirit we, His children, must live daily, *by faith*, in *complete reliance* and *exact obedience* to the *whisper* of the Holy Spirit. (1 Kings 19:12)

Another important word for Jesus' followers today is the word *confess*. The Greek word "*homologeō*," means "*to speak the same*." It means to honestly admit any act of overt or passive sin. See it as God does. Confess it! Be willing to turn from it and believe His Word for forgiveness. (1 John 1:9)

Application:

Read I John 1:5-9, James 5:16, Eph 4:30-32 slowly.

After reading, be ruthlessly honest. If you know that Jesus Christ lives within you, ask yourself: *"Am I filled with the Spirit?"* Does your life give evidence that you are?

Have you in some way *"quenched the Spirit"* so that you are not experiencing His power, joy, peace, and love?

Are you rationalizing or minimizing an act of overt or passive sin or disobedience?

Is there someone that you are not right with? Can you honestly say to yourself that you have done everything you can to be reconciled?

Is there a secret area in your life where you've attempted to shut God out of? Are you willing to confess this to God and seek His forgiveness? Would it help you grow in Christ-likeness to share this with a trusted friend?

Take some unhurried time to reread the above Personal Reflection and Application. Afterwards ask yourself, is there a specific sin you need to confess to God now?

In Galatians 5:16, 17, we are instructed to *"walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of our flesh."* To *"walk"* is to believe, obey, and follow the Holy Spirit's leadership in our lives, as Jesus did when He walked upon the earth.

Finally, once you confess your sins and trust Him for forgiveness, ask yourself: *"Am I now willing to believe God will grant me the power and fruits of His Spirit to be what He would have me be?"*

If so, you can expect *"rivers of water"* to flow from your innermost being. (John 7:37-38)



Action Step:

What is one specific action you can take today to acknowledge the presence and work of the Spirit in your life?

Are you willing to pray about meeting with one or two others to pass on what you've been learning through this journey of discipleship with Jesus; if so who might they be?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Meeting:

If you have not memorized the titles, verses, and references of the first five Traits, make every effort to learn them word perfectly.

Read John 8:30-32; 15:1-16 and Matthew 7: 24-27. Memorize John 8:31 and John 15:8

Before we begin Trait #6, spend time writing and sharing with a supportive friend about how you did with last week's step. What will help you take your action step? What will help you continue following Jesus' example in the step above?

## Trait #6: Learning to Abide in and Obey God's Word

(Bears much fruit.)

Paul wrote to his young disciple, Timothy, *"Train yourself on godliness."* (I Tim 4:7)

What is the difference between the physically fit and unfit? At least two things: diet and exercise. Improper eating patterns with little exercise leads to poor health and undesired consequences.

Likewise, as disciples of Jesus, we must properly feed and exercise ourselves spiritually. We do this by developing good habits of intentional daily time in God's Word and applying its truth to our lives.

### Principle:

*"If I am to become a Jesus-like disciple, I must learn to abide in and obey God's Word. I do so by meditating daily on what I read and by applying what I read to my life."*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

John 8:31, John 15:8

### Read:

John 15:1-16, Matthew 7:24-27, John 8:30, 31

### Scripture Responses:

Reread the following passages and respond to the questions.

John 8:30,31

When Jesus spoke to the Jews who believed Him, what did He say was the requirement of a true disciple of His?

Matthew 7:24-27

What does this parable teach us about the wise man?

What does this parable teach us about the foolish man?

What specific lesson does Jesus want us to learn from this parable?

John 14:21

What are the two conditions Jesus uses to describe those who love Him?

- 1)
- 2)

Matthew 4:4-11

We know that physical food and water are essential for our existence. What else did Jesus say is essential?

In all three temptations, what weapon did Jesus use to drive away the devil?

What can you learn for your own life from the account of Jesus' temptation?

Job 23:12

How did Job describe God's words?

Acts 17:10-12

Why were the disciples in Berea described as being more noble than those in Thessalonica?

What resulted in their community when they examined the Scriptures daily?

Psalms 1:1-3

Describe the benefits of delighting in God's law.

John 15:4-7

What must a disciple of Jesus do to "*bear fruit*?"

How much “*fruit*” can a follower of Jesus produce when he or she is not abiding in Jesus?

What results can you expect if you are abiding in Jesus?

John 15:8

Describe how you, as a follower of Jesus, can demonstrate that you are a true disciple.

In your words, what do Jesus’ words in verse 4 through 8 mean to you in your journey of discipleship?

Personal Reflection:

In the Scriptures above, we learn much about God’s Word and what happens to the heart of the disciple who reads, understands, and lives by that Word. Most believers are intellectually aware that we need to read the Bible, but many of us find our schedules too full to actually make time, daily, to engage God’s Word.

Remind yourself that you are in a relationship with God. Just like communications with your children or your spouse is essential to building a strong relationship, so is communicating with God. His primary manner of speaking with us is through His Word. We communicate with Him in prayer. So if we are to build a close relationship with God, we need time with Him alone both in His word and listening to Him in prayer.

Application:

Jesus said that His Word is as essential to life as daily food (Matthew 4:4). He also said that the path to becoming a true disciple is by continuing in, or holding to, His Word (John 8:31).

Note the specific ways you have seen God’s Word make a difference in your life:

Have you established a regular time each day to read and meditate on God's Word? If not, are you willing to dedicate equal time for daily reading and meditating on His word?

Action Step:

What is one specific action you can take today to further your commitment to spend time in God's Word?

Is there someone you can talk to who can help you establish a more effective time alone with God in His word?

What specific actions can you take to follow Jesus' example of the time He spent alone with His Father?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Meeting:

Before we begin the next lesson, review the first six Trait titles, verses, and references. Make an extra effort to learn them word perfectly will help to prepare you to mentor others.

Spend time writing or sharing with a supportive friend about how you did with last week's step. What will help you take your action step?

Read Matthew 6:5-15; 26:36-41.

Memorize Matthew 6:9-13

## Trait #7: Learning to Pray “The Jesus Way” (That His Kingdom might come.)

Jesus taught His disciples very little about preaching but much about prayer. Over the centuries, there have been multitudes of models for prayer. In Trait #7, we will look at the outline Jesus gave to His disciples. Here are a few of His teachings on prayer. Note His emphasis upon the heart:

*“And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites for they love to be ... seen of men”* (Matthew 6:5).

*“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition”* (Matthew 6:7).

*“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me”* (Matthew 15:8).

### Principle:

*“If I am to become a Jesus-like disciple, I must learn to pray as Jesus taught His disciples to pray.”*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

Matthew 6:9-13

### Key Passages:

Read the following as an overview for this lesson.

Matthew 6:5-15; 26:36-41 Before you begin your readings, ask God to give you new insight on how Jesus prayed and taught His disciples to pray.

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages and respond to the questions.

Matthew 26:36-41

Briefly describe this scene.

What did Jesus desire of His disciples and what response did He get?

What title would you give this passage?

What did Jesus desire of His disciples and what response did He get?

Matthew 26:41

Note that Jesus grieved to the point of death in the Garden of Gethsemane. What did Jesus ask His followers to do and for what reason?

Matthew 26:40

How long did He ask them to pray?

Why do you think He asked this question?

John 6:28,29

The disciples wanted to know how to do God's work. How did Jesus respond to their question?

What is THE WORK of God?

What is required for you to do the work of God?

Mark 11:22-24

How does the disciple of Jesus move mountains?

Can you apply these words of Jesus to your life today?

If so, what is the "*mountain*" you want most to see moved?

Hebrews 11:6

Why is it impossible to please God without faith?

Matthew 18:19-20

What are the conditions of answered prayer in these verses?

Matthew 6:9-13

Why do you think Jesus taught His disciples to begin this prayer with ***“Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name”***?

How is the Kingdom of God described in Romans 14:17?

What does it mean to pray, *“Your Kingdom come?”*

What does it mean to say *“Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven?”*

How would you define the Kingdom of God to a child?



### Personal Reflection:

Jesus talked regularly, openly, and humbly with His Father that His Father's will to be done. His prayers were always answered. (John 11:41,42) Praying as Jesus taught deepens my relationship with God. It's an ongoing conversation where we learn to see what God sees, depend on Him, and realign our will and heart to His.

Jesus denounced the religious leaders of the day because *"these people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me"* (Matthew 15:8). They knew Old Testament writings and teachings, but they didn't know their Messiah, Jesus.

To pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven is to pray for Jesus to return and His Kingdom to be set up on the earth. *But, it is also to pray that He will reign today as King* in any matter of concern to His followers.

In the first Trait, we learned that we cannot enter the Kingdom unless we humble ourselves like a little child.

In this lesson we learn the Kingdom of God is *anywhere Jesus reigns*.

We learn mountains can be moved when we pray as Jesus did, in agreement with two or three others (Matt 18:19,20) allowing Him to reign in us, believing Him to do what we cannot.

### Application:

Jesus wants us to have an intimate relationship with Him. He longs to have us share our hearts with Him.

Examine your heart for a moment. Ask yourself:

*"Do I want Jesus to reign as King in my heart and life?"*

*"Do I want God's will to be done, both in and through me, like it is done in Heaven?"*

*"Am I willing to take a moment and ask Jesus to reign as king of my will and heart right now?"*

*"What is one specific way I can change my prayer life today?"*

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns or matters of importance.

Before Your Next Meeting:

Again, carry a copy of the first 7 Traits and verses with you throughout the day. *Meditate upon them day and night*, especially before going to sleep or upon rising in the morning. Continue to pray He will conform you more into His likeness.

Read Luke 9:23-27; 14:26-33. Memorize Luke 9:23, 24.

Before we begin the lesson, spend time writing or sharing with a supportive friend about how you did with last week's step:

What will help you continue to take this step? What will help you continue following Jesus' example in the step above?

Finally, ask God if there is someone He might have you meet with to pass on what you learned in your journey through the Traits.

## Trait #8: Learning to Deny Self (Puts Jesus above self, others, and things.)

The world can be divided into two groups: the self-serving and the self-giving.

Jesus was a giver. He took up His cross, carried it to Golgotha and gave His life for you and for me. But it wasn't easy. He pleaded with His Father to *"let this cup pass from me"* (Luke 22:42). The writer of Hebrews said that Jesus *"endured the cross, despising the shame."*

Jesus knows the challenges we face as His disciples in becoming self-givers and not self-servers. The Apostle Peter said to those first disciples *"You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps"* (I Peter 2:21).

In this lesson we look at one of the most challenging of all requirements for being a true disciple of Jesus.

### Principle:

*"If I am to become a Jesus-like disciple, I must learn to be a self-giver. I learn by following the example of Jesus and by keeping myself rooted in His word, prayer, and by reliance upon the Holy Spirit."*

### Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to take a specific action to be more like Jesus today.

### Memory Verses:

Luke 9: 23, 24

### Key Passages:

Read the following as an overview for this lesson.

Luke 9: 23-27; Luke 14: 25-35

### Scripture Responses:

Read the passages and respond to the questions.

Luke 9:23,24

In these verses, what does Jesus instruct His followers to do?

What are the main hindrances in your life today that keep you from fully taking up your cross and following the example of Jesus?

Luke 14:25-27

What two specific requirements does Jesus ask of true disciples?

Luke 14:33

What requirement does Jesus state here for becoming a true disciple?

Matthew 13:44

What do you think was going through the mind of the man who found the hidden treasure when he was selling everything he owned to buy the field?

What relevance, if any, do you see in this parable to being a disciple of Jesus?

I Corinthians 6:19,20

How are followers of Jesus described in this verse?

To whom do we belong?

Psalms 24:1

What assets of God are described in this passage?

John 15:9-13

From these words, how would you describe Jesus' love for His friends?

John 12:23-33

After reading the context what do you think Jesus meant when He said, *“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone but if it does it bears much fruit?”*

What importance do His words have for His disciples today?

John 13:1-5; 13-17

What did Jesus know that made Him free to give His life as He did?

Does His example of unselfish service and giving have relevance to you today? If so, please elaborate.

### Personal Reflection:

In the passages above we learn that Jesus gave generously, sacrificially, and humbly. His service was both an expression of His love and an example for us to follow.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to believe Jesus is Lord of Heaven and earth and supreme owner of everything. He came into this world to reveal God and His love. He bought us by the price of His precious blood (I Corinthians 6:20, I Peter 1:18,19). And He left us His own personal example to follow so that we can know what being His disciple is all about.

As His disciples we acknowledge that *we own nothing*. Rather, we are trustees of the time, talent, and treasure He has given to us. Our response is to daily take up the cross (Luke 9:23,24); put Jesus Christ above self, others, and things (Luke 14:26,27,33); and, follow His example of being a self-giver rather than a self-server (John 13:1-15).

Application:

Do I believe Jesus was the supreme example of self-giving — an example that is almost impossible to fathom — that He humbled Himself, became a servant, and in the end, gave His life?

Can you honestly say you have acknowledged that you own nothing, not even your own life?

Can you honestly say you have made a commitment to put Jesus above self-interests, above other relationships, and above possessions?

If you are struggling with these questions, what is it that you are holding onto that keeps you from complete surrender?

Is it really worth holding onto?

What is one specific way you can deny yourself and put the concerns of Jesus above your own?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance.

Before reading the pages that follow, take some time to read and recite all of the Traits and verses. Allow yourself to meditate upon them.

## Where Do I Go from Here?

When God created man, He said, *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28). God commanded him, and his soon-to-be wife, to reproduce themselves physically.

Are disciples of Jesus to multiply spiritually as well?

In our sixth lesson, we focused on Jesus’ word: *“By this is My Father glorified: that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.”* (John 15:8)

Jesus called His disciples *“My children...”* (John 13:33) – not physical children, of course, but spiritual children. The Apostle Paul called Timothy his *“beloved son”* (I Timothy 1:2) and Titus his *“true child”* (Titus 1:4).

By *“much fruit,”* then, Jesus must mean both the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) as well as the spiritual fruit of disciples who reproduce themselves in others.

Paul wrote to Timothy, *“And the things you have heard from me... entrust to the faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

How does the disciple of Jesus *“bear much fruit”* today? First, by abiding in Jesus (John 15:4-8) and obeying Him precisely (John 14:21). But how else?

Jesus did it by investing in a few men and women.

The night before He died, He prayed these things to His Father:

*“I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do... I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world... now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You...”*

*“I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours...”*

*“As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world...”*

*“My prayer is not for them alone.”*

*“I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.”* (John 17:4,9,18-21)

In the first verse above, we see that Jesus called the discipling of The Twelve His *“completed”* or *“finished”* work. It was the work God had *“given Him to do.”* And it was God’s plan that these twelve ordinary men and the many women and close followers who followed and supported them would multiply themselves (John 17:20, 21).

Making disciples is not optional. Among His last words were: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”* (Matt 28:19)

Jesus taught that all of His followers are disciples, learners, apprentices of His. All are to be disciple-makers. All are to be missionaries — *“sent ones”* — who carry His message to all of the world (John 20:21).

You are to be congratulated for completing this study. May it be part of a life-long learning journey of becoming more like Jesus. May you pass on the things you have learned to others.

In conclusion, read prayerfully Romans 12:1,2:

***“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”***

Below is a prayer of dedication. If it expresses your heart’s desire, pray these words either aloud or silently. Pray whatever else is on your heart.

*Our Father in Heaven, I believe and acknowledge that out of Your boundless grace You gave Your precious Son, Jesus, who bought me at the cost of His own blood.*

*I recognize that You are the owner of the earth and everything in it, including all that I am and have. Everything belongs to You.*

*I ask now that You would reign as my King. Be enthroned in my heart. Live Your life through me. Fill me with Your Spirit and may the fruits of Your kingdom — **righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit** — mark all facets of my life. I pray that Your will may be done in and through me as it is being done in Heaven.*

*This day, in light of Your great mercy to me, I offer my life to You. Amen.*

Today’s date: \_\_\_\_\_

I sign this today with gratitude for God’s amazing grace: \_\_\_\_\_



Action Step:

Are there one or two others who you can meet with to pass on what you have learned? What do you need to do next?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Write out any questions, concerns, or matters of importance that will help you continue to be more like Jesus in this life-long journey of discipleship.

Finally, give yourself 30 minutes to an hour of relaxed time. Review all the Traits, verses, and references. Then, test yourself. See if you can recite the following page with the titles of all the Traits, titles, and verses word perfectly. If you can, well done. May you continue to grow in Jesus-likeness the remainder of your days!

## Traits of the Disciple of Jesus

1. **Follows Jesus** – John 20:21
  - Sent as He was sent.
2. **Loves God Back** – Matthew 22:37
  - With all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.
3. **Loves Others Unselfishly** – John 13:34,35
  - As Jesus loves us.
4. **Loves His Neighbor as Himself** – Matthew 22:38,39
  - Seeks the least and lost (Matthew 25:40, Luke 19:10).
5. **Lives in the Spirit** – John 7:37-39
  - Yields to, walks and is filled with the Spirit.
6. **Abides in and Obeys His Word** – John 8:31, 15:8
  - Bears much fruit.
7. **Prays the Jesus Way** – Matthew 6:9-13
  - That His Kingdom might come.
8. **Denies Self** – Luke 9:23,24
  - Puts Jesus above self, others, and things. (Luke 14:26,27,33)

## Too Proud to be Discipled?

by Jim Phillips

How would you respond if you had been a Bible teacher for 30 years, a follower of Jesus for over 40 years, a lay leader in the church, and after meeting a man for only ten minutes, he says to you: "would you let me disciple you?"

When this happened, I was sitting in my house in historic Annapolis, Maryland; one block from the U.S. Naval Academy (of which I was a graduate), one block from the Maryland State Capital building, and one block from the Annapolis City Dock. I was a successful businessman, a former Marine Corps Harrier pilot, and was living with my wife of 32 years. Honestly, my first thought was "do you know who I am?"

Now this man was senior to me, and well respected. Before I could say what I was thinking, I realized I had a problem. Who was I that I could not learn from another how to be a better follower of Jesus? The man who offered to disciple me was Jim Hiskey, co-founder of the C.S. Lewis Institute. He began our discipleship series with a simple question: "Would you take an assignment from me?" He took me through a discipleship series that represented a lifetime of learning about following the teachings of Jesus.

At first, memorizing scripture, and answering questions about familiar passages was dull and uninteresting to me. But then something happened. The love this man had for Jesus, the desire not just to know Jesus, but to follow Him in every way, broke through and began to show me where I needed to be more obedient in my walk with Jesus.

After Jim took me through "The Traits of a Disciple", I came to know Jesus as more than Savior and Lord, He became my Teacher and I became His student, His disciple. After this time with Jim, God gave me responsibility for the C.S. Lewis Institute Annapolis. My wife named our house "The Aslan House", and a journey began with Jesus that has eclipsed all my expectations.

What about you? Are you a follower of Jesus? Are you His disciple...one who learns from Him and puts it into practice?

As we study the gospels and the teachings of Jesus, I've come to believe there are traits of Jesus that stand out for His followers to emulate. I want to offer these traits to you for two purposes: One, for self examination; and two, for use in discipling another to encourage them to become more like Jesus.

**Trait 1. A follower of Jesus actually follows Jesus.** That is, they consider themselves "on assignment from Jesus". In John 20:21 Jesus said: "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you!" What do you think this means? How was Jesus sent by



His Father, How did he follow His Father's instructions? How do we follow Jesus' instructions? Are we as devoted to Jesus and His teachings as He was to His Father's?

Our life is not our own, we have a Commander in Chief, Who has made us for a purpose and wants our allegiance to His orders. The end result of Jesus' teaching is to be like Him (Luke 6:40) and be sent as He was sent (John 20:21):

- As He served, I am to serve (Mark 10:45);
- As He sought the lost, I am to seek the lost (Luke 19:10);
- As He made disciples, I am to make disciples (Matthew 28:19);
- As He loved others, I am to love others (John 13:34, 35);
- As He was humble and gentle, I am to be humble and gentle (Matthew 11:29);
- As a little child trusts his parents with humble, total dependency, I am, likewise, to trust Jesus (Matthew 18:1-4).

Frank Laubach was one of the great Christ followers of the twentieth century. He taught for a number of years in a seminary in the Philippines. He said this:

"As for me, I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree, until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty, resolved and then re-resolved that I would find God's will, and I would do that will though every fiber in me said no, and I would win the battle in my thoughts. It was as though some deep artesian well had been struck in my soul...and strength came forth." (1)

Is there an area of your life where you know Jesus would not be pleased? What keeps you from surrendering that area of disobedience to Jesus?

**Trait 2. A follower of Jesus loves God.** In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." What is love? Is it a feeling, can it be commanded as Jesus commands it?

C.S. Lewis said "Love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained." (2) What then does it mean to love God? May I suggest that loving God means everything I do is to promote God's goodness, His glory?

Our love for God is proportionate to our understanding of God's love for each one of us, His children. By meditating upon Jesus, His character and His sacrifice on the cross, we can more fully understand the cost He paid for our forgiveness. Jesus taught there was no greater vocation in life than being a lover of God. This was His mission... "The world must know that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me." (John 14:31)

Do you love God? Is it your intent to bring glory to Him in all that you do? Do you have behaviors or attitudes that displease God? Are there some coming to mind now that you

need to renounce? Do you need to recommit your life to promote God's ultimate good and glory?

**Trait 3. A follower of Jesus loves others.** In John 13:34, Jesus says: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

What does it look like to love others? If we use our definition of love from Trait 2, then should we not say that to love another is to ensure that everything we do or say is to promote the good of the beloved?

Who do you have a difficult time loving? Who is least deserving of your love? Who needs your love right now? Who needs your forgiveness, your unconditional commitment to their well being whether they deserve it or not?

A follower of Jesus loves even when they do not want to or feel like loving. Love is a choice, a decision, not a feeling, and Jesus expects us to do it, to everyone, at all times.

This is an e-mail I received from a C.S. Lewis Fellow after considering this command of Jesus:

"During the last few weeks, and in particular during the month in which we were discussing "Community of Believers" I became convicted of a relationship with a brother in our church that had become broken. We had not been on speaking terms for almost a year. It was clear that this was not honoring to God. By God's grace, and to a large extent aided by the reading and materials from April (The Bible study, Bonhoeffer and Keller), he and I have met twice now - once last week and again last night - where we both clearly and honestly laid out the ways in which we both felt wounded, and also to acknowledge our sins and offenses against each other and to seek each other's forgiveness. It was hard, but so worth it. We left last night embracing each other and feeling totally reconciled. I never knew such gospel centered reconciliation was even possible. There has been a huge weight lifted, for which I am so grateful to God and how he used the Fellows program to help me in this!" (C.S. Lewis Fellow)

Jesus loved others by washing His friends' feet. We may not need to literally wash someone else's feet but we can serve them. Loving others unselfishly in the manner He loved is not a suggestion for a disciple of Jesus. We are to love others unselfishly because He loves us willingly, unconditionally and sacrificially.

Who do you need to love right now? Why do you block God's best for you by disobeying His command to "love one another as I have loved you"?

**Trait 4. A follower of Jesus loves his neighbor as himself.** (Matthew 22:39)

How is this different from Trait 3 which is having love for others? Technically it is not. But Jesus knew that we all hear what we are taught through mental "filters". "Others" may be

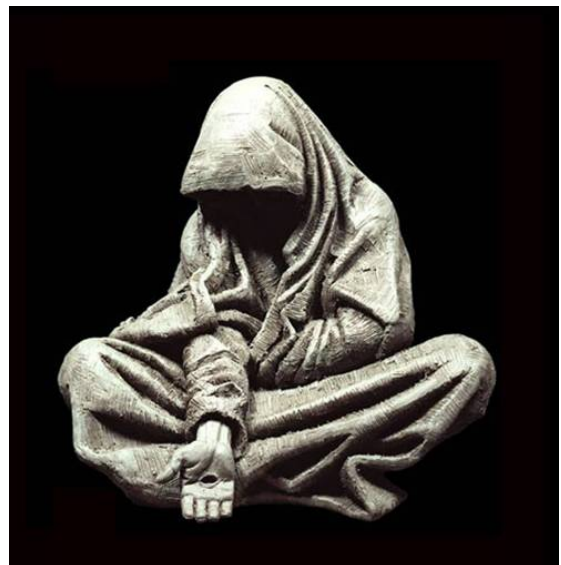
"those that I know" or "my family" or "those in my sphere of influence". This is why the "expert in the law" asked Jesus "who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29) He was seeking to exclude some from this command.

Who is your neighbor? Matt 25:40 & Luke 19:1-10 says your neighbor includes the "least of these" and "the lost". Who are the "least of these"?

Who comes to your mind when I suggest: they are the person you don't really want to have dinner with; the person you always send to voicemail when you see their number calling; the person you avoid when in a social gathering, or the person asking for money or food that you avoid on your way to work?

In Trait 4, Jesus challenges us to love those that are otherwise repugnant to us; to love the one who has hurt us the most; to love the one who least deserves our attention.

C.S. Lewis said: "We need to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship..... There are no 'ordinary' people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." (3)  
Does it change your perspective to think of everyone you meet as an eternal being?



Jesus loved us when we were a stench in his nostrils. Think of the worst sin you have done, the worst thought you have had, Jesus still loved you (sought your well being) despite your offensiveness to Him.

We love our neighbors by being a neighbor of loving compassion. Jesus taught His disciples to "be merciful (compassionate/forgiving) as your Father in heaven is merciful" (Luke 6:36). He wants us to exhibit the kind of love that compels us to go out of our way to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors.

**Trait 5. A follower of Jesus walks in the Spirit.** In John 7:37-39, Jesus says that "the Spirit will flow from within" a disciple. What does this look like, to walk in the Spirit, to have the Spirit flow from within?

In Gal 5:25 (New Living Translation), Paul says: "Let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." Do you ask the Spirit's will in all that you do? Are there things you do that you know the Spirit would not approve?

Jesus modeled for his followers how to live in the Spirit. Two words exemplified his life: reliance and obedience. To experience the power and fruits of the Holy Spirit, we, his children, must live daily, by faith, in complete reliance and exact obedience to the whisper of the Holy Spirit. (1 Kings 19:12)

**Trait 6. A follower of Jesus obeys God's Word.** In John 8:31, Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."

We are in obedience to something, either to righteousness or sin. Faith and obedience go together, you cannot have one without the other. You are a slave to what you obey!

Partial obedience is disobedience; procrastination is disobedience; presumption (self-confidence in your ways or actions as being best) is disobedience; anything less than full surrender is only "polished sin."

"Oh, break whatever it may be  
That holdeth back my heart from Thee,  
Who died my heart to win!  
All other love, however dear,  
However old, or strong, or near,  
Of which Thou art not theme and sphere,  
Is only polished sin." (Mrs. J.A. Trench) (4)

Surrender is a necessary condition for a Spirit-filled life, and surrender produces obedience. What about your life is in disobedience to God? Where do you need to surrender to His reign in your life?

**Trait 7. A follower of Jesus prays the Jesus way – that His Kingdom might come.**  
(Matthew 6:9-13 )

Where is Jesus' Kingdom? Answer: Anywhere He chooses to reign.

What then does it mean to pray for His Kingdom to come? Answer: That He might reign everywhere, in all people, in all circumstances, at all times, in everything.

What does it look like for Jesus to reign in you, your home, your work, your finances?

George Müller (1805-1898) is best known for his orphanage in Bristol, England. It was operated by faith, without ever making its financial needs known. Müller's purpose was to show the people of Bristol that there is a God in heaven who answers prayer. One day Arthur Pierson asked him, "What is the secret of your great work and the wonderful things that God has done through you?" Müller looked up for a moment, then bowed his head lower and lower until it was almost between his knees. He was silent a moment or two and then said, "Many years ago, there came a day in my life when George Müller died. As a young man, I had a great many ambitions, but there came a day when I died to all those

things, and I said, 'Henceforth, Lord Jesus, not my will but Thine,' and from that day God began to work in and through me." (5)

To pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven is to pray that Jesus will return and His Kingdom will be set up upon the earth. But, it is also to pray that today He will reign as King on earth in any matter of concern to us.

What about your life denies Jesus' authority to reign? Where do you try to limit His sovereignty? What do you withhold from His control?

**Trait 8. A follower of Jesus denies self.** In Luke 9:23, Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

What is a "cross"? Often we identify any difficult person or circumstance in our life as "our cross". Too often, these are just difficult people or circumstances but not a "cross". Jesus endured difficult people and circumstances, but what was the distinguishing mark of the cross?

Being fully man, and "being tempted in every way just as we are", Jesus undoubtedly did not wish to die a young man. He certainly did not want to suffer the agonizing death of the cross. He may have, as a man, had a desire to experience marriage, the intimacy of a woman, or even earthly children. But, He put these desires and expectations aside in order to willingly shoulder the circumstance of another, His bride, the church, us.

I offer that a cross is anything that we choose to shoulder for the benefit of another despite bringing us great pain, distress, or loss, even loss of desires. What are some examples of "crosses"?

- Forgoing a career to stay home and raise children;
- Opening your home to another while they get back on their feet;
- Spending the day clothing, feeding and finding shelter for a homeless person...while the Super Bowl is on TV;
- Sharing your praise with another, though you really did most of the work;
- Forgiving someone else's wrongdoing, at great cost and or pain.



So what does it mean to "take up your cross daily?" I believe it means shouldering someone else's circumstances, with no personal benefit other than knowing two nail-scarred hands are clapping!

A disciple, a follower of Jesus, puts Jesus above self, others and things. (Luke 14:26,27,33)



To be a disciple of Jesus is to believe Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth and supreme owner of everything. He came into this world to reveal God and His love. He bought us by the price of His precious blood (I Corinthians 6:20, I Peter 1:18,19). And He left us His own personal example to follow so that we can know what being His disciple is all about.

As His disciples we acknowledge that we own nothing. Rather, we are trustees of the time, talent, and treasure He has given to us. Our response is to daily, take up the cross (Luke 9:23,24); put Jesus Christ above self, others and things (Luke 14:26,27,33); and follow His example of being a self-giver rather than a self-server (John 13:1-15).

In summary - A follower of Jesus:

1. Follows Jesus ("on assignment from Jesus!");
2. Loves God;
3. Loves others;
4. Loves his neighbor (the least of these and the lost);
5. Walks in the Spirit;
6. Obeys God's Word;
7. Prays Jesus' way (that His Kingdom come...that Jesus reigns!);
8. Denies self!

In "The Pursuit of God" by A. W. Tozer, he offers this prayer:

"O God, be Thou exalted over my possessions. Nothing of earth's treasures shall seem dear unto me if only Thou art glorified in my life.

Be Thou exalted over my friendships. I am determined that Thou shalt be above all, though I must stand deserted and alone in the midst of the earth.

Be Thou exalted above my comforts. Though it mean the loss of bodily comforts and the carrying of heavy crosses I shall keep my vow made this day before Thee.

Be Thou exalted over my reputation. Make me ambitious to please Thee even if as a result I must sink into obscurity and my name be forgotten as a dream.

Rise, O Lord, into Thy proper place of honor, above my ambitions, above my likes and dislikes, above my family, my health and even my life itself. Let me decrease that Thou mayest increase, let me sink that Thou mayest rise above.

Ride forth upon me as Thou didst ride into Jerusalem mounted upon the humblest little beast, a colt, the foal of an ass, and let me hear the children cry to Thee, Hosanna in the highest." (6)



A question I ask myself often is: What does it look like to be a colt upon whom Christ rides? Do you know someone that after they have been with you and or others, your thoughts are not upon them, but on the things of the Spirit; like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, you say: "Did not our heart burn within us" while they were with us? (Luke 24:32)

Jesus does not want to be just your Lord and Savior, He wants to be your Lord, Savior and Treasure! Will you follow Jesus? Will you submit to His teachings? Will you be His disciple?

#### Footnotes:

1. Frank Laubach, *Letters by a Modern Mystic*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: New Readers Press, 1955) p14
2. C.S. Lewis, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, Ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p49
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Note: Much of this article was drawn from "The Traits of a Disciple of Jesus" created by Greg St Cyr and Jim Hiskey and the elders and pastors of Bay Area Community Church, Annapolis, MD.

Jim Phillips graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1975, and was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. in the U.S. Marine Corps. Following six years as a pilot flying AV-8A Harriers, Jim began an 18-year career with IBM. He served in various executive management roles in product design, development, sales and marketing. In 1999, Jim accepted a position with CAI Incorporated as a Division General Manager responsible for commercial business across a four-state geography. He continues in this capacity today with an office in Alexandria, VA.



Jim is also Director of the Annapolis Extension of the C.S. Lewis Institute. He lives with his wife Ann in Annapolis, MD. They have three children and four grandchildren.