

Topic 7: A Disciple Serves



Reaching Out and Serving Like Jesus

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

—Mark 10:45

For many believers, faith is like a precious family heirloom. It's ours, and we're thrilled to have it! We know it's extremely valuable. We even mention it from time to time in conversations. But we don't always use it in daily life. Like grandma's china that remains out-of-sight in a large box in the garage, modern faith for many believers can be real, but not exactly relevant.

Contrast that idea of faith with the kind of faith portrayed in the Bible. In the Scriptures, faith isn't something you merely *have*; it's something you *live*. You don't stop with pondering it—you practice it! Biblical faith is less of a noun and more of a verb. The kind of believing Jesus advocated is active and obvious to others.

In other words, we shouldn't expect following Jesus to make for an easy life. Gospel faith is restless and active. It comforts us, but doesn't ever let us get too comfortable. Jesus made it clear there's work to be done. We have a mission to accomplish. Among Christ's final words to his disciples? “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18–20).





Bible Study

1. Take a few moments to read and carefully consider these Bible passages that call us to action, compel us to go, and challenge us to embrace the same servant lifestyle and disciple-making mission that Jesus embraced:

- ▶ “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Jesus, in Matthew 5:16, NLT).
- ▶ “He [Jesus] told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves’” (Jesus, in Luke 10:2–3).
- ▶ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Jesus, in Acts 1:8, NLT).
- ▶ “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

What are your thoughts when you read such commands to do good deeds? To go and be a worker in the Lord’s harvest field? To be a witness? To serve others?

2. According to the New Testament, discipleship is the lifelong process of following Jesus in order to become like him. If this is so, we can’t just pursue the *character* of Jesus, we also have to take up the *mission* of Jesus and serve others. After all, 1 John 2:6 says, “Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”

Read:

- ▶ Matthew 10:40
- ▶ Mark 12:6
- ▶ Luke 4:18



How does Jesus describe himself in each of these passages? What does this mean for followers of Jesus?

3. **Single-minded. Focused. Committed. Intentional.** We could describe Christ’s life in all of these ways. So how, practically speaking, can a follower of Jesus today (with a job, bills, school, friends, family, etc.) embrace these same priorities in life?

A healthy approach to discipleship includes both being and doing. It calls for “with-ness” (i.e., being with Jesus) and witness (going for Jesus). Following Jesus is both personal and interpersonal. It encompasses both beliefs and behavior. It results in both internal transformation and external impact. We receive from God and from others, then we share what we have received.

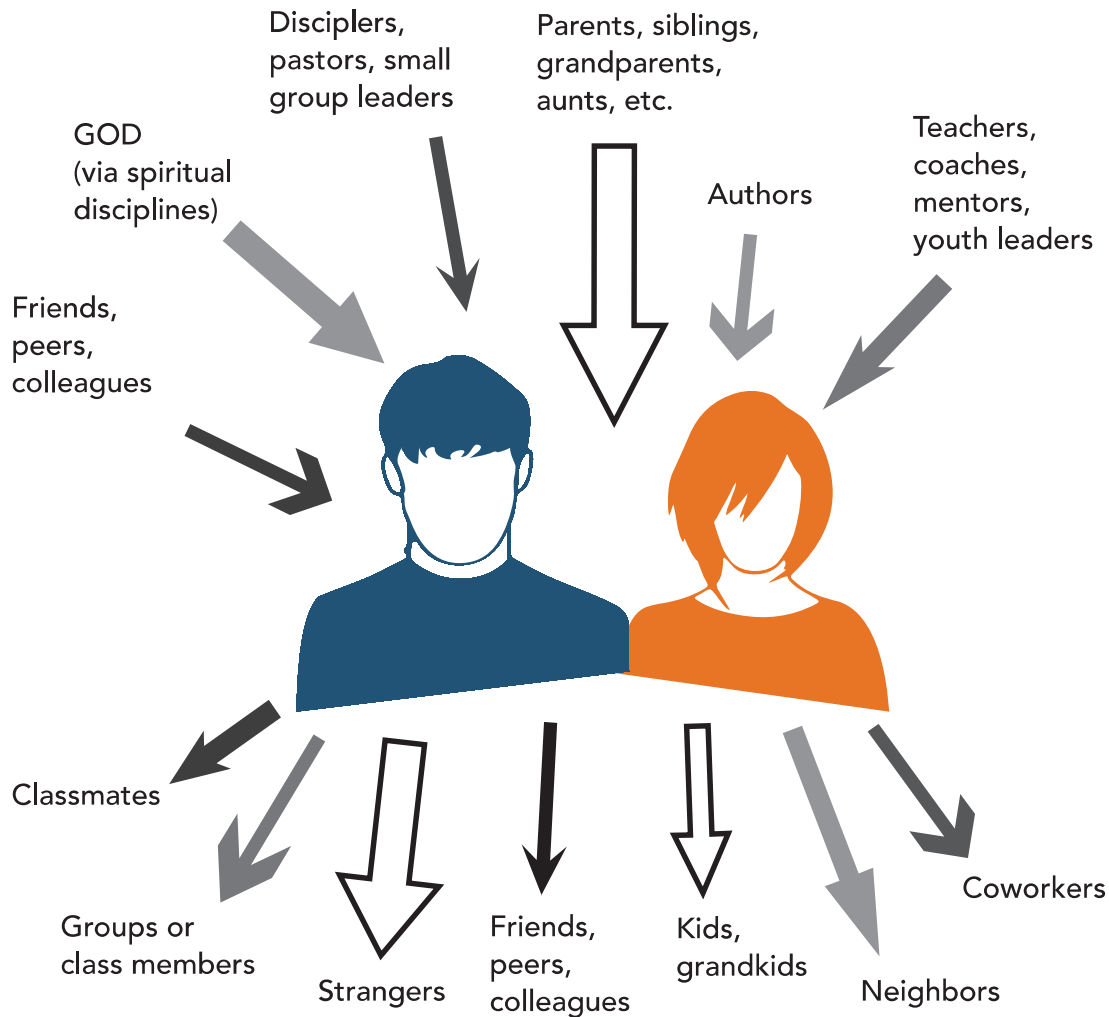
The diagram on the following page illustrates this truth.



“BECOMING A DISCIPLE” is

trusting in Christ alone for salvation and following Jesus in order to *know* Jesus and his teachings; to *grow* more like Jesus; and to *go* for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples. We do this by continually opening up ourselves to God’s transforming presence and by getting regular input from other disciples.

PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCE YOU



PEOPLE WHOM YOU INFLUENCE

“MAKING DISCIPLES” is

leading others to trust in Christ alone for salvation and to orient their lives around the three-fold desire to *know* Jesus and his teaching; to *grow* more like Jesus; and to *go* for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples. We do this by serving, and giving our lives away, as Jesus did. We share with and invest in others the wisdom, truth, experiences, insights, resources, skills, abilities, etc. God has given to us.



Personally embracing Christ's mission to go and make disciples may involve the following:

- ▶ **Rejecting** the self-centeredness of our culture and embracing the self-less, servant mindset modeled by Jesus (Philippians 2)
- ▶ **Understanding** you have been saved for a life of good works that match the unique ways God has created or "wired" you (see Ephesians 2:8–10)
- ▶ **Letting** your light shine out among neighbors, coworkers, friends, etc., by doing those good works in the power of God's Spirit (Matthew 5:16)
- ▶ **Discovering, understanding, and utilizing** your God-given abilities to serve and build up the Body of Christ (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 4)
- ▶ **Getting** equipped to minister to others (Ephesians 4:11–13)
- ▶ **Taking** the truth, training, and blessings God has given you and turning around and investing that in others (2 Timothy 2:2)
- ▶ **Learning** how to give a reason "for the hope that is in you," then sharing your own story of how the Good News of Jesus has changed your life (1 Peter 3:15, NASB)

Servanthood Action Scale

Examine each pair of actions or attitudes in the scale below. Where do you see yourself?

Doing occasional acts of service	↔	Having a servant's heart
Serving in "official" capacities	↔	Serving in "unofficial" capacities
Helping when asked	↔	Noticing needs and taking the initiative to help
Focusing on needed tasks	↔	Focusing on people in need
Serving according to what others need	↔	Serving according to my gifts and passions
The gift of serving (some believers)	↔	The command to serve (all believers)
"Out front" visible service	↔	"Behind-the-scenes" invisible service
Serving within the church	↔	Serving outside the church

Take-Home Reflections



In the gospel of John, Jesus described himself as “sent” by God in multiple passages. These are listed in the box. Look up the verses, read and underline them so you can easily remind yourself who sent Jesus.

Clearly Jesus saw himself as being on a mission from God!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 3:34 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 8:29 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 4:34 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 8:42 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 5:23–24 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 9:4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 5:30 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 10:36 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 5:37–38 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 12:44–45 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 6:29 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 12:49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 6:38–39 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 14:24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 6:44 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 15:21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 6:57 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 16:5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 7:16 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 7:18 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 7:28–29 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 7:33 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 8:16 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 8:18 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 17:25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John 8:26 | <input type="checkbox"/> John 20:21 |

- ▶ His single, declared objective was to accomplish the will of his Father in heaven (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38–39)
- ▶ He came, he said, not to be served, but to serve and give his life away as a sacrifice (Mark 10:45). His stated purpose was “to seek and save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10, NLT).
- ▶ To what end? To accomplish his announced intention to “build my church” (Matthew 16:18).



Life Application

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God's truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you've learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse, Mark 10:45.
2. Work through the personal "Your Inventory of Abilities that Meet Needs" list on pages 65–66. What are some of the unique ways God has gifted you and/or placed desires within you to make an eternal difference? How might your answers serve as clues to the role you can play in serving Christ and making disciples?
3. Wrestle with one or two of these questions:
 - ▶ What from the "Your Inventory of Abilities that Meet Needs" list surprises you? What avenue of serving God or making disciples would you like to explore more fully?
 - ▶ Who are the people who have poured into your life—and helped you grow spiritually? How exactly did they do that?
 - ▶ Do you have people into whom you are intentionally investing? Who? What does that look like?
 - ▶ What would you say to the person who said, "I really want to grow in my faith, but I'm honestly not that interested in 'serving others.'" Or "I'm not qualified to 'minister' to someone else"?
 - ▶ The New Testament teaches that God gives *each* and *every* believer in Christ *spiritual abilities* for accomplishing His work in the world (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 4). Experience further reveals that we all have *natural talents* and *unique passions* for making a difference. Do you agree that God will get the most glory, and we will feel most fulfilled if we minister, serve, and make disciples in ways that use our strengths and involve our interests? Why or why not?



Your Inventory of Abilities that Meet Needs

I believe God has *gifted* me to (check all that apply) . . .

- Invite/recruit:** Reaching out to others to encourage their participation in relationships, groups, or events where they can grow spiritually and serve others
- Meet/greet/host people:** Taking the initiative to show hospitality and make people feel welcomed and accepted
- Pray for others:** The consistent holy habit of interceding for others



- Organize/administrate/plan:** Bringing order to chaos, and handling details to accomplish a task or pull off an event
- Show compassion:** Noticing hurting people and moving into their lives to tangibly demonstrate the love of Christ
- Listen/counsel:** Taking time to hear the hearts and hurts of others and help them process what God is saying to them
- Mentor others:** Coming alongside others so as to share knowledge, model life skills, and/or impart wisdom gleaned from ones' own successes and failures

- Be crafty:** The ability to sew, knit, decorate, etc. to produce beautiful objects for events that bless others



- Shepherd others:** A knack for coming alongside those who are encountering difficulties in life to comfort and guide
- Train others in specific skills:** The ability to pass on the info and skills needed for success in a specific area of life
- Find and distribute important facts:** Making sure people have the information they need to make progress in the faith
- Do construction:** The ability to take basic materials and, using the proper tools, safely build needed items





- ❑ **Inspire others through artistic endeavors:** The ability to sing, play an instrument, paint, sculpt, write, act, dance, make videos, or take pictures and in that, to communicate God's truth creatively, beautifully and memorably



- ❑ **Encourage and motivate:** The rare ability to impart new hope and courage to those who have become discouraged
- ❑ **Share my faith:** The ability to effectively show and tell the good news of Christ's offer to forgive sin and give eternal life
- ❑ **Help with simple tasks:** The willingness to lend a hand with various projects or random needs that do not require special skills or expertise
- ❑ **Show mercy:** Demonstrating love, acceptance, and kindness to those who are filled with shame

- ❑ **Share or give:** Cheerfully donating one's time, energy, effort, resources and/or funds to worthwhile kingdom efforts
- ❑ **Lead teams/groups/projects:** Guiding people to the successful and satisfying completion of a specific task
- ❑ **Provide technical and mechanical assistance:** The ability to keep gadgets and gizmos from breaking and/or to fix them when they do stop working
- ❑ **Lead discussions/teach:** Serving as a catalyst for helping others understand and apply biblical truth
- ❑ **Cook or bake:** Serving Christ by serving enjoyable meals

