

Bonsall Community Church

# Discipleship



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# What Is Discipleship?

The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word *euangélion*, which simply means “good news.”

The Greek word *disciple* means “student” or “learner.” In New Testament times, a disciple entered into a master-apprentice relationship with his teacher. A disciple’s hope was to acquire his mentor’s wisdom and skills, and to imitate his life. The leader’s expectation was that, once trained, his disciple would repeat the process.

Jesus began his public ministry by urging people to “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15, NASB). He then called those who were responsive to his message to become his devoted followers. Approaching some simple fishermen, he said, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17, NASB).

## A Definition of *Disciple*

A disciple is a person who follows Jesus—to *know* Jesus and his teaching; to *grow* more like Jesus; and to *go* for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples.

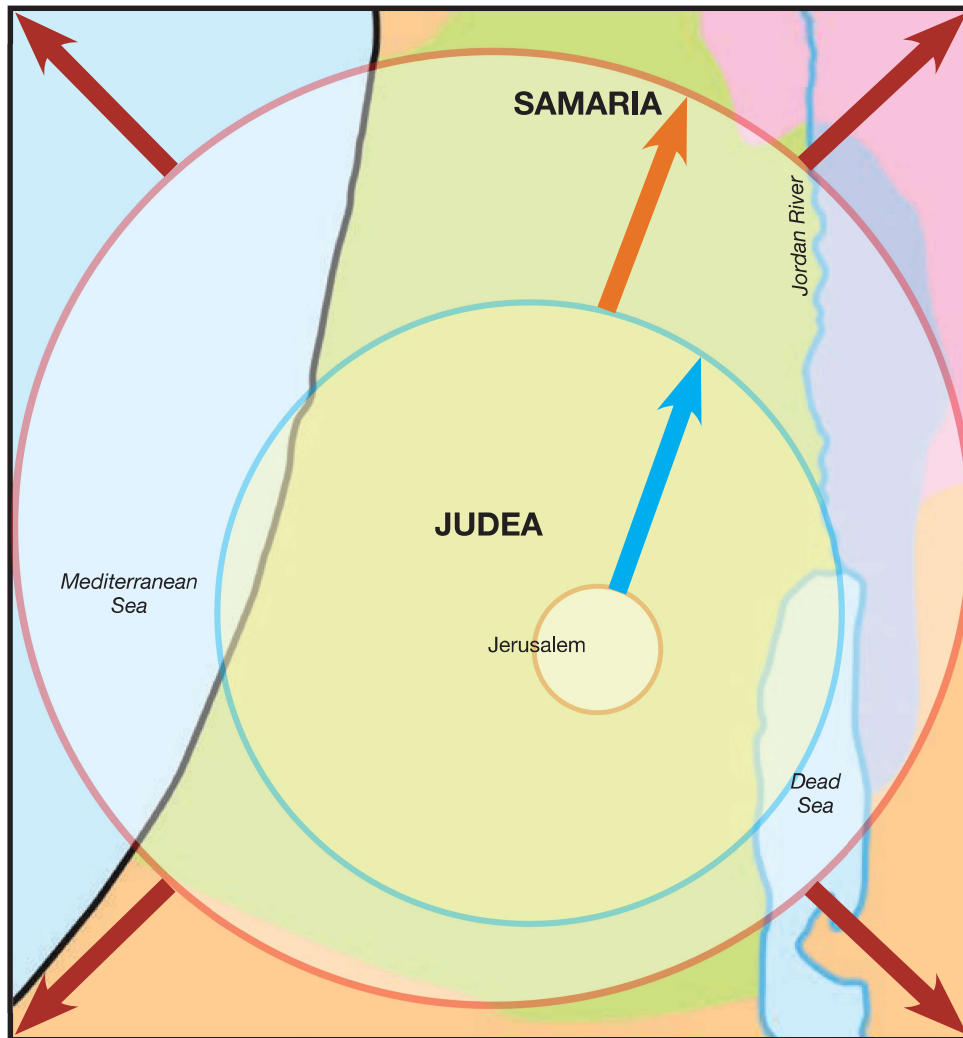
According to Jesus, discipleship alters every facet of life: our beliefs (knowing), our essential nature (growing), and our actions (going). Using Christ’s words from Mark 1:17, the chart at the bottom of the page shows how discipleship affects every facet of a disciple’s life.

Jesus’ unlikely band of 12 disciples spent three amazing years with him. They listened to his authoritative words. They observed his awe-inspiring miracles. Christ invested huge amounts of time in his followers. He trained them and introduced them to a life of humble servanthood. He modeled for them how to love (John 13:33–34). Slowly but surely, their lives were radically transformed by watching and imitating.

After his death and his resurrection, and just before returning to heaven, Jesus called his followers together and commissioned them to help others learn to follow him:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

“Follow me”	“I will make you become”	“Fishers of men”
Knowing	Growing	Going
New truth	New character	New mission
Information	Transformation	Multiplication
Head	Heart	Hands



With the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and because of the faithfulness of these disciples, the gospel of Jesus spread like wildfire. The church of Jesus expanded from Jerusalem, into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). (See map.)

This story continues all the way up to the present day. We get to join in the great mission of calling on people everywhere to repent, believe in the gospel, and follow Jesus by faith.

## Five Traits of a Disciple

A disciple's life is marked by five traits:

1. **Trust:** Disciples believe the gospel and—by faith—follow the Son of God. The essence of the spiritual life is *faith* (Hebrews 11:6). Understood correctly,

faith is less a noun (something we "have"), and more a verb (something we "exercise"). Disciples trust God. They take him at His word. They live, not on the basis of what culture recommends or what seems right, but according to what God has said.



2. **Love:** Disciples live in healthy community with the people of God.

The greatest commandment, Jesus said, is to love God wholeheartedly and to love others sacrificially (Mark 12:28–34). It is only a lifestyle of love that shows the world we are Christ’s followers (John 13:34–35). In fact, without love, our spiritual efforts are as worthless as a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13).

3. **Learning:** Disciples are shaped and guided by the Word of God.

Disciples of Jesus study and embrace the teachings of Jesus. We hunger to know the Lord and understand his Word better and better. But we seek biblical/theological knowledge not as an end in itself. Rather, we acquire God’s truth and *take it to heart* in order to experience life change.

4. **Life Change:** Disciples are yielded to and transformed by the Spirit of God.

Jesus’ original call in Mark 1:17 was to “Follow me . . .” [in order to] “become” [something they weren’t]. Likewise as we follow Jesus—as we internalize God’s Word, submit to his Spirit, encounter trials, live in authentic but messy community, and engage in spiritual practices that open us up to God’s transforming presence—Christ’s character is formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

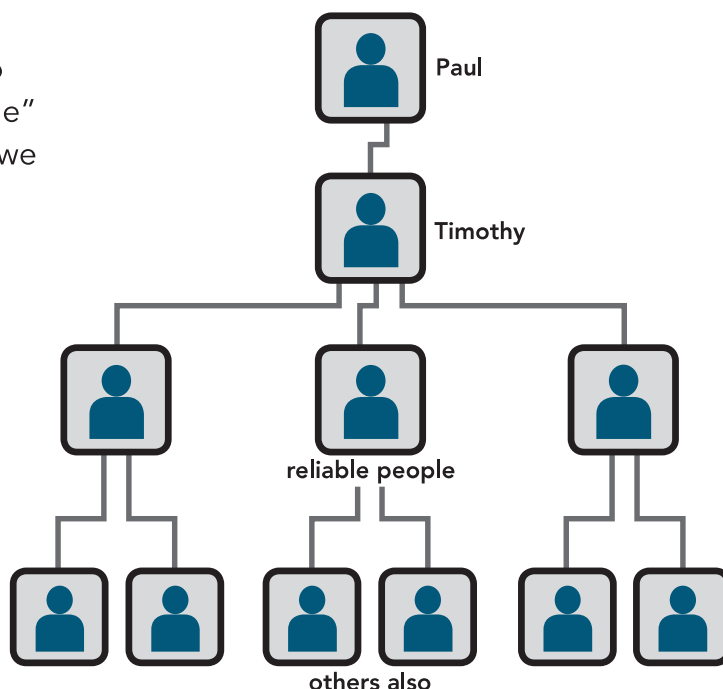
5. **Service:** Disciples are devoted to and engaged in the mission of God.

Disciples serve like Jesus, choosing daily to “give their lives away” (Mark 10:45). This means using the resources, abilities, and opportunities God gives to further *his kingdom* (Acts 20:24). Christ’s servants share the gospel message boldly, clearly, and humbly . . . with neighbors near and far. And as we become better disciples of Jesus, we also seek to make and serve other disciples of Jesus.

The apostle Paul repeated this idea to Timothy when he said:

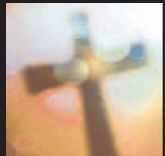
“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Here is a real-life picture of the New Testament model for discipleship.



## Section One

# Believing the Gospel



- Topic 1—A Radical Message:  
The Uniqueness of the Gospel of Jesus ..... 12
- Topic 2—Coming to Faith:  
How to Begin a Relationship with God ..... 19
- Topic 3—All Things New:  
Understanding Who You Are in Christ ..... 25
- Topic 4—Assurance of Salvation:  
Being Sure That You're Right with God ..... 34