

## Following the Master

Michael Wilkins

A Biblical Theology of Discipleship, Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus

### Part 1 First Steps of the Journey

Pg 22 Sometimes our discipleship programs thwart true discipleship. We can become so involved with our programs that we isolate ourselves from real life.

Jesus called his disciples to walk with Him in the real world.

### Chap 2 Jesus and Disciples Today

Pg 25 the hard words, Matt 10:37-39 not worthy of Me if you love father or mother more than me... Take up your cross and follow Me, Whoever finds his life will lose it...

Much confusion as to what we should be doing in making disciples

Pg 26-34 Discipleship Models, **(Good summary of the different views)**

Disciples are Learners: a disciple is a learner who follows a great teacher  
mathetes comes from the verb to learn

John the Baptist, John 1:35 the Pharisees Mt 22:15-16 had disciples

At early point in Jesus ministry, people were disciples even though it was revealed later they were not believers. John 6

Yet later in the book of Acts, disciples seems to be used to refer to any believer.

Disciples are Committed Believers A believer who has made a commitment to follow Jesus and obey his radical demands of discipleship. Pentecost, vast difference between being saved and being a disciple.

This view emphasizes the radical challenge to count the cost of discipleship

Interpretation issue: Is the crowd saved or unsaved, Is Jesus making a call to deeper commitment or a call to salvation? This view tends to set up a 2 class system

Disciples are Ministers: A believer who has been called out from among lay believers in order to enter into ministry. Common view in traditional churches  
What is difference when the 12 are called disciples and called apostles?

Disciples are Converts, Discipleship Comes Later First step to come to Christ, believe and be baptized, then go on to grow in grace This view stresses conversion as the beginning point of becoming a disciple. Supported by the common use of the term in the Gospels and Acts

Disciples are Converts Who are in the Process of Discipleship Disciple is a true believer who enters a life of discipleship at the time of conversion. One becomes a disciple of Jesus at conversion, and the process of growth is called discipleship.

The Great commission included both conversion and growth. Growth is the natural result in a new disciple's life. Jesus sent out His disciples to make converts, this is directed to all believers. In this view: All believers are seen as disciples, and the Christian life is the outworking of Jesus' discipleship teachings.

Remaining question of this view: What about the demands to leave everything to follow Jesus? Must one count the cost to be saved? Must commitment come before, or be a part of conversion? (lordship salvation)

Pg 33-34 Question remains, If a 2 level conception of Christianity is not valid, then what about the Christians who are not living up to the standards of Jesus? Is there a distinction between salvation and discipleship?

Pg 34-38 Overcoming Difficulties, Interpretation Issues

Remember the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century world,

Identify the Audience,

Teaching to the crowd deals with becoming a disciple, evangelism

Teaching to the small group with growth in discipleship

The 12 as Disciples vs the 12 as Apostles (the last phase of His training)

Allow the Book of Acts to determine meaning

disciple is synonymous with true believer, apostle refers to leadership role

Acts 4:32; 6:2,7; 9:26; 11:26; 14:21-22

Pg 38 Disciple came to mean adherents of a great master One who has made a life commitment to a particular master and his way of life.

A true follower of Jesus

Pg 40-42 Definitions: (to be developed more in the next few chapters)

Disciple, general sense: a committed follower of a great master

Disciple of Jesus: One who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Him as Savior and God, and has embarked upon a life of following Jesus.

Discipleship, the ongoing process of growth

Discipling helping one another to grow as disciples

Ray Note: drop the word discipling, rather state the verb, Make Disciples. The verbal action commanded by Jesus to help others come to know Jesus and follow Him.

Pg 44 Theological implications, the danger of Lordship salvation, adding works to salvation...

Pg 47 Jesus wants a church full of disciples who dare to go out into the world to make a difference and to live life the way it was intended to be lived. He is right there with us to lead the way.

### ***Part 2 Jesus' Discipleship Environment***

Part 2 includes an extensive look at what a disciple is, in different historical contexts.

### ***Chap 3 The People Called to Follow God, Discipleship in the OT***

Pg 53 Ex 6:7 I will be your God, and you shall be My people

Pg 57 Discipleship in the OT is the covenant relationship between Israel and God.

Pg 58 OT commands to follow God, to walk in His ways, Deut 4:1-14; 1 Sam 12:14  
Dt 10:12-13 Dt 6:4-9

Pg 61 OT examples of following, Moses, Elijah & Elisha The relationship was oriented toward service, a servant of God

Pg 63 the discipleship relationships in the OT were related, and occurred during crisis periods in Israel's history

The master always pointed beyond himself to God.

### ***Chap 4 Disciples in the Greco-Roman World***

Pg 72 Word for disciple first used by Herodotus in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. A learner, apprentice The learner was acquiring knowledge or a skill from a person who was an expert in the area of study.

Pg 76-77 During the time of Christ, the learning emphasis of the term decreased, the focus shifted increasingly to the relationship between the master and the disciple. Imitation of the conduct of a human master became a significant feature of a disciple of a great master...

Pg 78 methetes was a committed follower of a great master,

### ***Chap 5 Disciples in the World of Judaism***

Pg 83 Disciples of Israel's Religion, a follower of a type of teaching, the Pharisees, or Sadducees etc

Pg 84 Followers of a Religious Institution, Students of the Law and tradition, practitioners of legalistic adherence to the Law

Pg 87 Disciples of a Prophet, ex, John the Baptist, followers who assisted him, followed his standards of prayer and fasting, Mt 9:14; Mk 2:18

Pg 90 Disciples of a Messianic Movement, Those who expected a military king would arise and throw off the yoke of the Romans, this was the expectation of many of the early followers of Jesus. John 6:60-66

Pg 93 **Short summary:** Discipleship was a common relationship in the ancient world. It involved a commitment of an individual to a great master or leader. Jesus took that practice, and used it as an expression of His kind of relationship with His followers. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus patiently taught His disciples what it meant for them to be His kind of disciple.

### *Part 3 Jesus' Form of Discipleship*

Jesus told His followers to Make Disciples. Matt 28

His form of discipleship was not primarily for study, but for service, to help the Master in His mission...

### *Chap 6 The Jesus Movement*

Pg 99 The call of Jesus was a challenge to enter into a relationship with Him that would result for me in an entirely different worldview and an entirely different lifestyle.

#### Stage 1, Personal Initiative to Follow Jesus

pg 102 followers of John, transitioned to follow Jesus

Called Disciples in John 1:35, 2:2, they believed in John 2:11

#### Stage 2, Jesus' Call

pg 104 Jesus shifted His public ministry to Galilee early disciples were drawn from existing networks of relatives, brothers, business partners, Lk 5:10  
The call was to follow Him personally Those who responded were called disciples. His call included those who seemed unqualified

pg 108 Either OR, He who Is not with Me is against Me, Lk 11:23

pg 109 Come out of the crowd, don't just be spectators Lk 14:25-35

pg 109 making disciples from among the crowd, Mat 9:35-38

pg 110 Count the Cost, Harsh statements regarding family, Lk 14:26-33

Lk 9:59-62 no one looking back is fit for the kingdom

Jesus personalized the cost of discipleship according to what He knows are the priorities of a person's heart. Father and mother, possessions etc

Pg 111 Distinction between Call to Discipleship and Call to Apostleship

Call to discipleship, a call to the multitude of people to follow Him,

a call to salvation

A call to enter the kingdom of God, a call to believe on Jesus for eternal life.

Pg 112 a call to Apostleship, a call to 12 specific men into a special relationship of service. Men who were to become apostles. **Lk 6:13** *He chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.* These were men who would become leaders of the early church.

Ray Question: Is Mk 1:17 Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.

Is that a call to all disciples or part of the call to Apostleship?????

### Stage 3: Jesus Sifts the Followers

Pg 114 In the early stages, a great multitude of disciples followed Jesus.

Lk 6:17; Jn 6:60 Defining point was the feeding of the 5,000

Jn 6:14-15 they wanted to make Him king, messianic expectations

Pg 115 After feeding of 5,000, Jn 6:22-59 Spiritual food, I am the bread of life vs 66 many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him vs 67-68 the true disciple: *You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.* A disciple of Jesus is one who makes a faith commitment to Him.

### Stage 4: The Limited Group of Followers

pg 116 This stage came during the final weeks of Jesus' ministry, Jesus had not come to establish an earthly kingdom, He had come to go to the cross to provide salvation and the gift of eternal life.

Final days, the crowds as for Barabbas to be released, Mt 27:15-26

Pg 117 Faithful followers, the women, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Jn 7:50, 19:38-42 At this point, they had nothing to gain by following Jesus

Pg 118 Having sifted out the curious followers, Having made it clear what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, Jesus give the command to make disciples A disciple is a person who comes out of the crowd of unbelievers, to claim Jesus as Savior and Master, and leads others

### Stage 5 The Early Church

Day of Pentecost, all who believe indwelt with the Holy Spirit, power... *and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch, Acts 11:26*

Acts 14:21-22 All that Jesus had taught the original disciples was now to be taught to new believers so that new converts could be obedient disciples following the ever-present Jesus.

Pg 119 Implications, the different definitions of discipleship come from a focus on one or two of these stages.

There is a progression of faith, both historically, and for an individual

Not all those who respond are true believers

The Holy Spirit is the key: He convicts, regenerates, and causes growth

Question: How do we express to a pre-Christian, to "Count the Cost?"

### **Chap 7 Becoming Like Jesus**

Pg 123 Discipleship is becoming like Jesus as we walk with Him in the real world. every area of our life, directed to the whole person

The 12, the 70, the women, the wider group of followers,

Pg 130 the wider group did not physically follow Jesus, the 12, 70 and women, followed Jesus to help Him in various, specific ways

Pg 131 Mk 5:18-10; Lk 8:38-39 Gerasene demoniac, told to go home and tell his family and friends what Jesus had done for him.

Lk 14:27 each disciple is to carry his cross

pg 136 daily self-denial, daily following in His footsteps

Pg 132 Grow to become like Jesus

Pg 134 **Marks of a disciple**, In His Word, John 8:31-32

Loving brethren, Jn 13:34-35; Bearing fruit, Jn 15:8

Pg 137 Obey, observe all He commanded, Spiritual disciplines of prayer etc

Pg 142 All aspects of our lives, ethical, physical, relational, social, intellectual, emotional, psychological Walking with Jesus in the real world Jn 17:14-18

Pg 143 Walk with other disciples

### **Chap 8 The Twelve**

Pg 145 the role of a Christian training bubble A time of relative safety where a person can be taught the necessary skills to perform in the real world.

Example Military Bootcamp

Pg 147 Jesus gave the 12 3 years of specialized training

Pg 152-166 A very good summary of each of the 12 disciples

### **Part 4, Discipleship in the Gospels**

This part summarizes the different aspects of discipleship brought out in each Gospel account. Just as each Gospel emphasizes a different side of Jesus, so each account emphasizes a different aspect of a disciple.

#### **Chap 9 Matthew, Examples with a Commission**

Pg 175 The 12 were ordinary men. Jesus called them to embark on a lifelong adventure that requires single-minded devotion to the Master.

Pg 177 Matt and Mark refer to a small group of Jesus disciples, Luke and John refer to a great crowd of Jesus disciples. Matthew emphasizes the small group of disciples who were able to accompany Him, the 12.

Pg 179 Matt refers to three groups, The disciples of Jesus, the Crowds and the Jewish leaders.

Pg 180 The objective of Jesus was to make disciples from among the crowd.  
Matt 19:16-22 The crowd is a neutral group out of which came those who would either become disciples of Jesus, or join the religious leaders in opposing Him.

Pg 183 A person become a disciple through a faith commitment to Jesus. A person is either with Jesus or against Him. Matt 12:30

Pg 187 Jesus spent his earthly ministry teaching and training his disciples, then He sent them out

**The Commission**, Make Disciples Matt 28:16-20

Luke 24:45-48 John 20:21-23 Making disciples is accomplished through preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus name. Becoming a disciple is accomplished by a person turning to Christ for the forgiveness of sins, receiving salvation. Same as in the early church, Acts 4:32; 6:2

Pg 189 The Great Commission is more than securing salvation, it also includes the process of growth as a disciple - accomplished as a new disciple is obedient to what Jesus commanded. This is directed to ALL believers.

Pg 192 All believers are equal, but there are distinction of function or role. The 12 were being trained as leaders.

#### **Chap 10 Mark: Servants of the Redemptive Master**

Pg 197 *Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...* Mat 10:45

The essence of discipleship is servanthood, this includes motivation, position, ambition, expectations and example. Mk 9:33-37; 10:35-45; within larger discipleship section of 8:27-10:45

Jesus is not self centered by others centered.

### ***Chap 11 Luke: Followers on the Costly Way***

Attachment to Jesus radicalizes every aspect of a person's life

Pg 207 Luke mentions large numbers of disciples The 12 were chosen to be apostles out of a much larger number of disciples, Lk 6:13-17.

Not only were the 12 sent out, but there were also 70 sent out, Lk 10:1-16

Jesus took with him the 12 and several women, Lk 8:1-3

Pg 210 Disciples of Jesus are followers on the Way.

Entrance faith alone, Lk 7:50; 8:48; 13:22-30; 17:19; acts 10:43; 13:38-39;

16:31 Once a person enters through the door, the believer is introduced to the Way, a pattern of life following Jesus.

Pg 210-21 The theme of "counting the cost" of following Jesus

Lk 10:25-37 The life of following Jesus included detachment from competing allegiances and giving personal allegiance to Jesus as Master

Family: Lk 14:26

Self, Lk 14:27 must carry his cross God's will a continuing discipline.

Possessions, Lk 14:28-32

Pg 218 Each person must count the cost of allegiance to Jesus, but that cost is personalized by Jesus to each individual. Matt 13:45-46; Gal 2:20

Pg 219 Implications: reconciling the gracious invitation with the harsh demands the extremes of works salvation and easy believism.

The invitation is to be "with Jesus" the means to enter is through faith

The salvation invitation should include the expected cost of the life of discipleship.

We enter into a life long process of being conformed to the image of Christ

As we share the Gospel, Luke's emphasis on the Cost, should cause us to be careful to include the life that lies ahead for the one considering the claims of Christ.

### ***Chap 12 John, Believers Marked by Jesus***

Pg 226 Only true belief makes true disciples, Central characteristic of the disciple is belief, accepting the claims of Jesus as true.

There is an ongoing process of gradual understanding and perception.

Pg 230-234 The Marks of a Disciple

John 8:31-32 Abide in the Word

John 13:34-35 Love one another

John 15:8 Bear Fruit, Gal 5:22-26; John 4:34-38; Phil 1:11; Col 1:10

These are a great foundation upon which to model our personal life and build a discipleship ministry



- 1) the Beginning, Regeneration, through faith in Christ
- 2) The teaching of the Word of God to grow
- 3) Loving others for support
- 4) Bearing fruit, through the filling of the Holy Spirit

## ***Part 5, Discipleship in the Early Church***

### ***Chap 13 Acts, The Community of Faith***

How do the passages in the book of Acts contribute to our understanding of discipleship? Are there other terms introduced, synonyms?

Pg 244 God has always invited His people into community. 1 on 1 discipleship pushed too far develops a mindset of Independency that is unhealthy, we must resist the individualism of our culture

Pg 247 talks about older brother Bill, The challenges we face are formidable, without community they become impossible. Individual disciples must function as a community, the family of God.

Pg 248 Luke uses disciple, Acts 6:1, 7 those who believe, Acts 2:44; 4:32; 5:14  
In Acts, Disciple is a title for those who have placed their faith in Jesus and are now followers of Jesus, converts.

pg 250 disciples first called Christians at Antioch, Act 11:26  
disciple, Christian, believers, brothers/sisters, saints all used, synonymous  
Disciples, Acts 13:52; 14:20-22; 15:10; 18:23

Pg 259 In Acts, the 12 are never referred to as disciples but rather as Apostles  
The apostles were chosen from a larger group of disciples for a specific role

Acts 1: vs 1-3 Focus on the teachings of Jesus  
vs 4-5 Live out the unity brought by the Holy Spirit  
vs 6-8 Be a witness of the good news  
vs 9-11 Look forward to His return

Pg 270 Jesus called disciples to follow Him, Now He was gone, The community is now to hold us together. One another relationships, & Structure, defined roles

**To believe on Jesus draws a person into community, a community that defines its expectations, responsibilities and privileges in terms of discipleship.**

Acts, Devoted to Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking of Bread, Prayer

Pg 279 Discipling is an outgrowth of the life of the church, all we do in the church is somehow related to making disciples

Personal relationships is at the heart of the process. We are called to community

### **Chap 14 Disappearing Disciples?**

How do we explain the curious absence of the word Disciple in the Epistles?

Various opinions...

Pg 287 Gospel narratives describe in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, the actions of Jesus and his followers, as He prepared them.... The Epistles are written in the 1<sup>st</sup> person to fellow believers addressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person describing our relationships with the resurrected Lord, along with a community of faith, in a hostile culture.

Other words are used, believer, brothers/sisters etc Since Jesus is no longer present to be followed, other terms naturally came into use to describe our relationship with the Risen Lord.

Pg 289 we need to be careful not to lose the emphasis of the Gospels  
Our intimate relationship with Jesus is at the core of the Christian walk  
It must not disappear from our mind-set.

### **Chap 15 Epistles, Disciples in Other Words**

Before Jesus left, He promised His disciples the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit

The goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus, in everyday life

1 Peter 2:20-21 follow in His steps We cannot follow Jesus physically, yet we are to follow Him in His example and teaching provided in the Gospels.

Paul wrote, Follow me and I follow Christ, 1 Cor 11:1

Related Terms, Believer, Brother/Sister, Servants, Church, Christian

Related Teaching: Follow Jesus, Jn 12:26; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 Th 1:6; Heb 12:2-3

Bear the Cross, Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; Gal 2:20 Rom 8:13

Marks of Discipleship:

Abiding John 8:31-32, Love John 13:34-35; Bear fruit, John 15:8

Abide, 1 Jn 2:3-6; 3:24; 4:13-15;

Love, 1 Jn 4:16, 19-21

Bearing fruit, Gal 5:18-23; Phil 1:11; Col 1:10

Light of the World John 1:6-10; 8:12; Mt 5:13-16;

1 Jn 1:5-7; Eph 5:8-14

Prayer: Lk 11:1-4; 1 Thes 5:17; Eph 6:18-20; Jas 5:13, 16;

Eph 6:19; 1 Tim 2:1-2

Related Metaphors for Discipleship:

Walking, Gal 5:16; 1 Jn 2:3-6

Shepherd and Sheep, Jn 10:7-18; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:2-4

Branches, Jn 15:1-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Phil 2:5-10  
 Imitation, Phil 3:17; 2 Thes 3:7; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1

Life with the risen Christ is different from life with the Earthly Jesus, but the writers of the epistles draw heavily from the discipleship themes of Jesus.

1 Pet 2:21, *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.*

### **Chap 16 Apostolic Fathers, Martyrs for the Name**

Pg 311 the word martyr comes from the Greek word martus, meaning witness.

Lk 9:23-26 If anyone would come after Me...  
 to follow Jesus no matter the cost

This chapter centers around Ignatius, bishop of the church at Antioch in Syria  
 He traveled to from Syria to Rome and wrote 7 letters,  
 He used the word disciple more than the other apostolic fathers.

Pg 329 the CWL is a process completed only at death and union with Christ,  
 Vindication of the reality of our Christian life is realized at death, when we stand  
 before the Lord

Willingness to be obedient even unto death was for Ignatius the proof that a  
 person was a Christian, and true believer, a disciple.

Count the cost, many all called to give up their comfort, career, family and their lives  
 for the sake of the Name of Jesus

Pg 335 Discipleship is the Christian life, and each of us has been called to different  
 forms of that life. I must daily count the cost, and bear the cross that Christ has  
 called me to carry.

### **Part 6, Toward the Third Millennium**

What does following the Master mean now as we move into the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium of the  
 Christian Age?

### **Chap 17 Jesus' Discipleship Expectations**

What does Jesus expect??? !!!!! There tend to be extremes, We can become  
 guilty we are not meeting the standard, OR we can become complacent about  
 our Christian lives. Much of the problem comes from faulty expectations, from  
 others, from "institutions."

Example false views: Discipleship is some form of specialized, advanced training for  
 Christians. Often to hold special roles within the church.

Pg 342: DEFINITION: A Disciple of Jesus is: One who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Him as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following Him.

A process where a person is being modeled by the Apostolic Teaching, Empowered by an experience with the living God, and being a participant in a community of disciples. This all shapes a way to walk, preparing us for a mission to fulfill.

Discipleship is the Christian Life

It is not to be separated from the rest of our lives... It address the whole person

Discipleship is a Process

Much more than a curriculum, Training and modeling in the family is a key element. Ideally, there should be a balance of the biological family and the Spiritual family in the discipleship process.

Discipleship IS the Ministry of the Church

The Church needs to address all areas in the process of making disciples, there should be different forms of training, for every area: secular and sacred, family and church, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional.

We are to Follow Jesus into Life, every area of life, Discipleship is to be lived, not just studied.

### ***Chap 18 Walking with the Master in Your World***

The author gives an example of living out disciple making in his life, specifically the world of surfers when his children were in their teens.

Disciples of Masters Other than Jesus, Slight Deceptions

1) Disciples of Moses, Devoted Traditionalists, Jn 9:28

Today, Church people, going to church, and believing the right things The danger of clinging onto religious tradition

2) Disciples of the Pharisees - Academic Religionists Mt 22:15-16; Mk2:18  
Extremely dedicated people, Two dangers, Legalism, diligent to do the right things, Other danger: Intense focus on Bible Study, over intellectualizing the Christian life, breeds an attitude of arrogance and superiority, a cloistered ascetic monasticism, separating from the world, rather than living in it.

3) Disciples of John the Baptist, Members of a Movement, Mk 2:18; Jn 1:35  
Today, the Jesus Movement of the 70's, It was an emotional high, the excitement of the crowd etc

4) Disciples Who Left Jesus, Jn 6:60-66 Jesus did not meet their expectations of throwing off the Roman government

Today: People who want God to conform to their way of thinking, They are disciples but on their terms and according to their expectations. Possible example would be those who expect the church to be a conservative political entity.

The tragedy is that each of these types of disciples should have prepared them to be followers of Jesus. In each case they became focused on the Practices of discipleship but lost sight of the Goal of discipleship. Institutions are to equip us, they are a means to an end, but what can happen is the Institution becomes the main thing. The institution becomes more important than the individual. The Individual is trained to serve the institution.

### **Tough Questions:**

- 1) Are we making disciples of our Institutions rather than of Jesus?
- 2) Are our disciples proficient at Programs or at living in a committed relationship with Jesus?
- 3) Does our attachment to the institution isolate us from the world, or equip us to reach and change the world?
- 4) Is the focus on the program, or is the program a means to an end, that of focusing and seeing Jesus more clearly?

Simple version: Has the church become the end instead of the means to an end?

The Preventative Measures: Balanced Disciple Making

A focus on Personalized Discipleship, requires a personal relationship  
(doing a DBS together, prayer together etc)

Challenge them to Count the Cost,

Various Securities in Life can be a substitute

Riches, Family, National or Tribe superiority

Help the to Become Like Jesus, the 3 Marks of Discipleship

- 1) Abiding in the Word, Jn 8:31-32
- 2) Loving One Another, Jn 13:34-35
- 3) Bearing Fruit, How?

Fruit of the Spirit, Gal 5:22-26

New Believers, Jn 4:3-38; 15:16

Good Works, Phil 1:11; Col 1:10

Must model what it looks like in the world, 1 Cor 11:1

Don't let ministry become the main thing. Ministry is intended to make Disciples of Jesus, He is the Main Thing. "I cannot walk for them, I can only show them the way down the Path." Show them the way.

Book ends with a Crazy long Bibliography of discipleship books