

What is a Disciple?

Disciple: Following and Learning From Jesus (Part 1)

Matthew 28:19-20

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | [Slides](#) | 1.20.21

Famous Last Words

- Bob Hope, the famous comedian, died at age 100 in 2003. It was reported that on his deathbed, his wife Dolores asked him where he would like to be buried. His response and final words were this: "Surprise me."¹
- Convicted murderer Thomas J. Grasso used his last words to complain about his last meal. He said, "I did not get my Spaghetti-O's; I got spaghetti. I want the press to know this."²
- Recently I saw a TikTok video from someone who shared the last words from his grandfather - "I'll always remember my grandfather's last words. He said, 'Boy, stop shaking the ladder.'"³
- I was blessed to be with my great grandmother right before she passed. These were not her last words, but some of the last words she said to me. She saw Katelyn and said to me, "She's so pretty."
- Tonight, we're not going to look at Jesus' last words. These are some of the most influential words ever uttered. These famous last words are the marching orders of the church and for people who claim allegiance to Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20

- In Matthew's gospel account, these are the last words of Jesus. This is a conversation between Jesus and His eleven disciples (Judas is gone at this point) after he died on the cross and was resurrected, and right before he ascended into heaven.
- **Matthew 28:16-20** - **16** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** 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, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."⁴

¹ <https://theweek.com/articles/467927/surprising-last-words-11-entertainers>

² <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/58534/64-people-and-their-famous-last-words>

³ <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMJ3QsJtB/>

⁴ All biblical references in this document are taken from the New International Version (NIV). *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

- **28:17** - "they worshipped him; but some doubted."
 - I find this description of the disciples extremely helpful and hopeful: "some doubted."
 - The disciples saw Jesus' literal resurrected body, and still doubted.
 - Like all of you, I, too, have experienced doubt. I have questioned some aspects of Christianity. I have had a really hard time reconciling some of my experiences with my expectations of who I believe God to be. I have also struggled to believe some of the claims of the Bible.
 - The passage does not say, "Those who did not doubt worshipped."
 - Worship and doubt are not incompatible.
 - Continue to worship God even if you're doubting. God can handle your doubts.
 - If you do have doubts, don't ignore them. Examine them. Study. I can guarantee that if you're experiencing a doubt or have a question, other followers of Jesus have also experienced those same doubts and questions.
 - Disciples don't run from truth. Disciples seek the truth.
 - God can handle your doubts.
 - A disciple is not someone who does not experience doubt. A disciple is one who continues to worship and trust Jesus even when he or she doubts.
- **28:18** - "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
 - Jesus is the ultimate ruler and king of all of creation.
 - "The risen Jesus is pictured as Lord of heaven and earth--the cosmic ruler in God's stead...The lowly Son of Man has been enthroned as the exalted Son of Man...his resurrection was not only the vindication but also his enthronement...he is God's representative."⁵
 - His resurrection proved His identity. (Acts 2:30-33)
 - Since Jesus has ultimate authority, what He says goes. When He makes a command, we are to obey it and it will be fulfilled.
- **28:19** - "go and make disciples"
 - "Disciple" will be a major theme of our worship services for us over the next number of weeks.
 - "Make disciples" is a verb in the Greek.⁶
 - These are our marching orders. This is the mission of the church. This is our mission. This is why we are here. This is why HFC was created: to make disciples.

⁵ M. Eugene Boring, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 375.

⁶ Boring, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 375.

- **28:19** - “of all nations”
 - The Greek word here for nations is *ethne*. It’s where we get the English word *ethnic*. It can also be translated as *Gentiles*.⁷ The message of Jesus is for all people, not just the Jewish people. The gospel is for all ethnic groups.
 - Side note--this is why Christians should be on the front lines of antiracism. We believe that all people are created in the image of God, are worthy of dignity and respect, and are loved so much by God that Jesus was willing to die for them.
 - Think about the inclusivity of Christ. All nations are welcome to the table of Jesus. The message of Jesus is not just for Jews, Americans, or members of a certain skin color. Jesus is for everyone--rich and poor, educated and uneducated, white, brown, and black.
 - The invitation of the disciples to follow Jesus has been extended to all people.
- **28:19** - “baptizing them”
 - Baptism = immersion
 - 3 reasons why disciples are baptized
 - Jesus’ command
 - Jesus commands His disciples to be baptized and to baptize others.
 - Disciples obey Jesus.
 - We baptize and are baptized because Jesus told us to.
 - Jesus’ example
 - Jesus was baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist, before He began His public ministry. (*Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22*)
 - What, according to the earliest disciples, baptism accomplishes
 - *Romans 6:3-8* - don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7** because

⁷ Boring, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, 375-376.

anyone who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

- *Galatians 3:26-28* - So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - If you have considered baptism, please talk with me. I'd love to have a conversation with you about what it would look like to be baptized and to fully submit to Jesus as your King and Savior.
- **28:19** - "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"
 - When we become Christians, we are baptized into the name of the Triune God. We join God the Father, Son, and Spirit in their eternal community.
 - When Jesus was baptized in *Matthew 3:13-17*, we see the Trinity gathered together there as well.
- **28:20** - "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"
 - A key aspect of our following Jesus is our continuing education in the ways of Jesus.
 - We always learn from Him.
 - Disciples are life-long learners. We are life-long students of our teacher, Jesus.
 - We are also to teach others the ways of Jesus.
- **28:20** - "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
 - And this, to me, is one of the sweetest promises of Scripture.
 - Jesus is with us. Emmanuel, "God with us." (*Matthew 1:23*)
 - Jesus, the Son of God, is with you. He is with me. He is with us. Jesus is present with you always.
 - When things are hard, He's with you. When you're struggling, He's with you. When you're fearful, He's with you.
 - The presence of Jesus is key for His disciples.
 - Because He is with us we can do the hard things He requires of us. Because He's with us we can be courageous in difficult times. Because He's with us, we can be the type of people He created us to be.
 - You are never alone.

What is a disciple?

- The word “Christian” is only used three times in the whole Bible (*Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16*); “disciple” is used 281 times in the New Testament.⁸
- The Greek word translated as disciple in the New Testament is *mathetes*. When translated literally it means *learner*.⁹
- Mike Tanaro - A disciple is a follower/learner of Jesus.
- David Young - “A disciple is someone committed to following Jesus and becoming like Him”¹⁰
- Dallas Willard - “[A] disciple, or apprentice, is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is...it is what [Jesus] calls us to by saying, ‘Follow me.’”¹¹
 - “I need to be able to lead my life as he would lead it if he were I.”¹²
- Christians are disciples. We follow and learn from Jesus. If you’re a Christian, you’re an apprentice of Jesus.
- Discipleship is a process. We never arrive. It’s more of a journey than a destination. Discipleship is about transformation.
- *Philippians 1:6* - “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- *2 Corinthians 3:18* - “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
- A disciple is a life-long follower and learner of Jesus.
- A disciple never arrives. They never complete their discipleship in this world.
- Becoming a Christian and your initial faith in Jesus is very important. It’s important to be baptized and start your walk with Him. But baptism and your initial faith is not the finish line. It’s just the beginning!
 - Think about parenthood. The goal of parents is not to just give birth. The goal is to raise their kids to be God-honoring mature adults.
- Being a disciple is about transformation. It’s about growing in maturity. A disciple is always striving to be formed more fully into the image of Jesus.
- A disciple also helps make other disciples.
- Helping others follow Jesus is an essential part of following Jesus.
 - *28:19* - “Therefore go and make disciples”

⁸ <https://jdgreear.com/are-you-a-christian-or-a-disciple/>

⁹ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011), 21.

¹⁰ David M. Young, *New Day: Restoring the Revolutionary Mission of Christ’s Church* (Murfreesboro, TN: New Day Press, 2016), 155

¹¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperOne, 1997), 282-283.

¹² Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 284.

- Mark Dever - "discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ."¹³
- Are you discipling someone? Did someone disciple you?
- A large part of your following Jesus is helping others follow Jesus.
- Being and making disciples are the marching orders of the church. This is our first priority.
- David Young - "Making disciples is the only future we have. If we do everything else, but we don't make disciples, we have failed. If we do nothing else, but we make disciples, we've won. It's that simple...Disciple-making is the only score we can make. Disciple-making is the only mission we have. Disciple-making is the only hope God gives us for developing mature Christians. Disciple-making is what every ministry, every church service, and every sermon ought to be about in your church. Disciple-making is God's plan A for the church. And there is no plan B."¹⁴

Discipleship Groups

- A way our ministry will strive to help make and grow disciples of Jesus is discipleship groups. These groups are new.
- What will these discipleship groups look like here at HFC?
 - Instead of having weekly guys and gals groups, we will have discipleship groups.
 - These groups will be gender-specific.
 - There will be 3-4 people in a group.
 - These are high-commitment groups.
 - Everyone in the group will commit to certain practices that will help you grow more into the image of Jesus.
 - Each week you will study a different aspect of following Jesus.
 - There is no set meeting time. You will discuss when you'll meet within your group.
- I encourage everyone to sign up for a group. I believe that these discipleship groups will help you grow.

Everyone is being disciplined.

- Everyone is disciplined by someone or something.
- What or who are you being disciplined by?
- Who or what has the greatest influence over your life?
- You are being formed.

¹³ Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13.

¹⁴ Young, *New Day*, 150.

- Are you putting yourself in a position to be formed more into the image of the Son or someone/something else?
- Much of who you are is likely the result of you being discipled many people in your life.
- Before you became an adult, you had little to do with who you were surrounded by. You did not choose your parents, family, teachers, or peers. But now, you have a lot of agency in who you're around.
- You have a lot of control over who you become.
 - You can control who you're around much more.
 - friends
 - who you date
 - You can change what you do in your free time.
 - You can decide the spiritual direction in your life.
- God is the one who does the formation. The Holy Spirit is the one who works in your life. However, you have choices. It's clear in scripture you can quench the work of the Spirit in your life (*1 Thessalonians 5:19*).
- Are you putting yourself in positions to be more or less formed into the image of Jesus?

Discussion Questions

- Everyone is being discipled. All of us are being formed. What influences, forms, and disciples current college students the most in our culture? What/who are most college students discipled by?
- Who is a faithful disciple of Jesus in your life? What are they like?
- Who "discipled" you? How did they help you follow Jesus?