

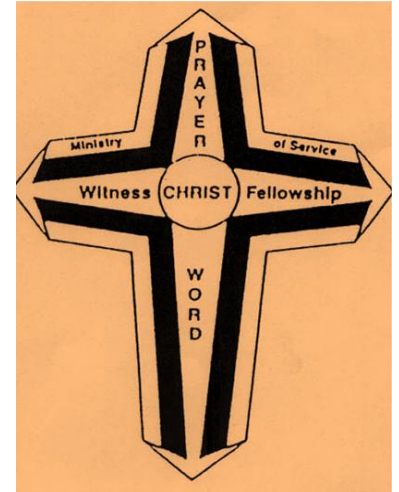
## *Discipleship Study*

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

A disciple's life of following Jesus can be summed up in the disciples cross illustration to the right. In this illustration, there are five essential principles of a disciple's life; Christ, the Word, prayer, fellowship, and witness.

Obedying each principle will lead the follower of Jesus to put into practice the ministries of a disciple.

Each week during Lent, we will be studying one of the five aspects of the Disciples Cross illustration above.



**The Disciples Cross**

## *The Disciples Cross*

### **1. Christ in the Center**

The first principle of the disciples cross is found in the center. Christ must always be at the center of the life and ministry of the disciple.

- John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."
- Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

I believe that it is possible for us to believe in Jesus as Savior and still not let Him be the Lord of our lives. We can claim Jesus saved us from our sins but still refuse to allow Him to change our lives and use us for His glory. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."

- What would your life be like if your heart were fully devoted to God?

*Ask your group to share what they think about this question.*

*I really think if I were totally devoted to God I would spend much of my time differently. I would find it much easier to let go of things and trust him. I would be far more sensitive to His movement in my life and the lives around me. I would be more willing and available to respond to his leading.*

One of the toughest teachings of Jesus comes from Luke 14:26-33. In this passage, Jesus is challenging us as followers. He is saying that we must love and pursue Him more than any other person, possession, or purpose. Can you say that you love Jesus more than any other person? That you desire Him more than any other possession? Do you have more passion for Him than any other purpose?

Take a moment and list anyone or anything that is taking priority over Christ in your life:

***This is very personal so be careful not to offend or force but make a safe environment for people to openly share as they are led. Don't judge, just listen and let God reveal.***

**Person:** When I first dealt with this question in my life I realized that I had let my family (Sherry and my daughters) often become more important to me than Jesus himself. Don't get me wrong, I still struggle with that and now my two granddaughters come into play as well. But years ago I had to accept and embrace that God is first in my life and even my lovely wife is second to Him and His call in my life.

**Possession:** Possessions have never been an issue for me but for many it may be. Not only the pursuit of things but also the occupied time and focus things take in our lives. For example, video games, cell phones and gadgets, TV... these things take up more of many people's attention than Jesus does. There are people who cannot find the time to be with God but would never miss a TV series or fail to check email. We can find all kinds of time to text our friends minute by minute throughout the day and yet can't seem to figure out how to stop and lift up our thoughts to God.

**Purpose:** Most people have passions that they pursue with unbound energy. Hobbies, arts, sports, careers, even ministries... and yet when we come to the point of pursuing Jesus we are less than enthusiastic and committed. I used to pursue my career with such passion that it consumed my life. I was a workaholic. I wanted to do the best and be the most successful I could be. Sure doing our best is good but when our pursuits take us away or distract us from pursuing God that is a problem. He should be my passion, my purpose, my desire, my all in all.

- Are you ready to completely submit to Jesus as the Lord of your life? Do you really want to take up your cross daily and follow Him? What is stopping you?

**Let people share**

As I have studied the teachings of Jesus I have come to the conclusion that to allow Christ to be the center of my life I must develop a clear communication with Him and learn to obey what He reveals to me. I must seek God in prayer and listen to Him through His Word. To that end, a private, intimate, quiet time with God every day is essential to developing a love relationship in which He is the center of my life.

- Do you have a daily quiet time with God? If so when and where?  
**Let people share:** Many find time first thing in the morning best. Others, time at night before bed best. It doesn't matter when or where but that you find a time to be with God. Make sure to create the opportunity for a quiet, private moment to be with God.
- If you do not have a daily time with God, what is preventing you from it? What can you do to change that situation or priority?  
**Let people share**
- What do you do during your quiet time with God?  
**Let people share:** Listening to what God has to say and thinking about what he wants you to do in obedience is what God desires for all of us. Meditating on the Word and praying are key parts to a time with God. Worship and praising him, petitioning him with our prayers, seeking him for guidance and intervention in our lives is vital. Using a journal to record what God is saying is also an important aspect of our time with God. It is not so much about what you do but who you are with, God, Himself!

In an effort to assist you in developing a daily quiet time with God, each day of the week I am asking you to read the scriptures below and in a journal or notebook answer the following two simple questions:

- What God Said to Me: (My Discovery from His Word)
- What I Said to God: (My Prayer Response)

**Daily Bible Reading For This Week:**

- Day 1: Luke 10:38-44
- Day 2: John 15
- Day 3: Matthew 26:36-56
- Day 4: Matthew 6:25-34
- Day 5: 2 Chronicles 16:9

➤ Based upon what you have read this week, how important do you feel your time with God really is?  
**Let people share**

During your small group time this week share with the group what God has been saying to you during your private devotional time and how you are responding in prayer and obedience.

\*Small group leaders: I realize that if you are like me you will never get through all of the questions or discussion so always choose what you wish to cover. One thing that is real important during this study to reinforce the learning and the disciples is to encourage and hold accountable your group for reading the word everyday and journaling their thoughts. One way to create an atmosphere for that is to remind them weekly and during some part of your meetings, ask them to share what God has been revealing to them during their private devotional time.