

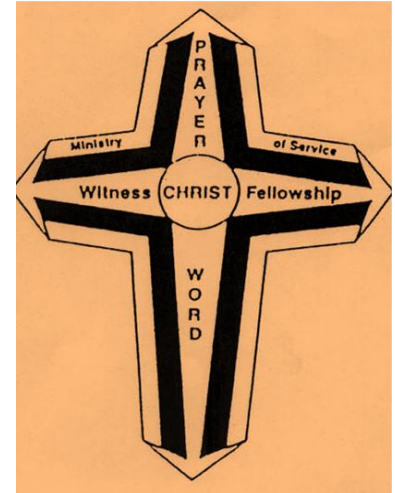
Discipleship Study

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 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 leading up to Easter, we will be studying one of the five aspects of the Disciples Cross illustration above.



The Disciples Cross

The Disciples Cross

2. Live in The Word: Our Vertical Relationship with God

When Christ is in my life, He leads me to His truth. It is through study of the Word of God, we come to know, love and obey God. Through obedience to the Word, we do His will.

- John 8:31-32, To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

The Message translation of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-14 says, "Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention."

Last week our focus was upon making Christ the Center of your life. Putting him before any person, possession, or purpose is the first step in following Jesus. Spending a daily quiet time (no matter how long) to seek him in prayer and His word is essential to that end.

A strong relationship with Jesus is not that much different than that with a spouse. They both require love, commitment and communication.

This week I want to dive more into the power of the Word of God and what it means to live in the Word. The way to have Christ living in you is to have His word remain in you. Jesus said that if we listen to His words and obey what He tells us to do we are truly His followers and then we will begin to know and experience truth that gives real freedom (my paraphrase of John 8:31-32).

- Read Joshua 1:7-8.

Joshua was told by the Lord to meditate on the Word. Meditating is far more than reading or memorizing. It is putting it deep into your heart where it becomes truth and begins to affect the way you think, act, speak, and ultimately live.

- Avery Willis said, "Memorizing puts God's Word in your head. Meditating puts it in your heart." What does his statement say to you? Is he saying that memorizing is bad or meditating is better?

I want to go on record. It is good to memorize scripture. But memorizing alone does not change us. Sure it is good because in the midst of trials or decisions God may bring a truth to mind. But more than memorizing we

need to meditate on the Word. We need to think and reflect on what God has to say to us. What He wants us to do with His truth. How He wants to change our lives.

➤ How do you meditate on the Word? *Let people share. I have listed some thoughts below.*

May I suggest that when you go to the Word of God, you go expecting to meet God in a real and personal way. When God speaks to you through His Word you are experiencing a direct encounter with the one and only true God.

Therefore go to His Word with expectantly and ask Him in prayer to reveal Truth to you. (Luke 24:45) Then read and meditate on His Word until the Holy Spirit stops you with a Truth. Reflect on that Truth. Tell yourself, I just heard the voice of God speaking to me! Then ask yourself, what has God just said to me? What does He want me to do with this Truth? God has reached down to speak to me so how must I obey His Word to me today?

Read these verses: Hebrew 4:12, 16, John 15:7, Isaiah 40:31, Psalm 119:105,

➤ If we believe that we have the opportunity to meet God in person and hear from Him directly every time we open His Word, then why do you think it is so hard for us to squeeze in a few minutes each day to meditate on the Word of God?

Let people to share the struggles and reasons for not giving time with God's Word priority above all things. Look for ways to encourage people. And above all, don't let guilt overshadow the joy. We are not called to feel guilty about our screw-ups but rather we should just rejoice and enjoy our time with God.

➤ Jesus taught clearly that we are to hold onto His teachings and obey His commands. (Luke 6:46, Matthew 28:20, John 8:31, John 14:15, 23, John 15:10...) Why do you think we fail to live in obedience to God's Word?

Let people share thoughts on obedience. Obey has become a four letter word. Of course it is four letters but God tells us to obey for our own good yet we think it is a bad thing. For many obedience is a foreign concept. We think that as Christians we are called to go to church, listen to a message, give an offering, maybe serve somewhere, and then go home and live the rest of our life according to our will and our own ways. But that is not the life Jesus has called us to. He has called us to obey. For others obedience is painful. We have to give up or change things in our lives that we are unwilling to change so we ignore or twist the truth to fit our comfort. God has not called His people to comfort. He has called us to obey His Word.

In obedience, God has a great promise for us. Look at the results of obeying God's Word: We will be made strong, (Luke 6:48) experience freedom (John 8:32), answered prayers (John 15:7) and experience His divine presence in our lives (John 14: 23, Matt 28:20).

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 the Week:

- Day 1: John 1:1-14
- Day 2: Deuteronomy 6
- Day 3: 1 Timothy 3:14-17
- Day 4: John 8:31-32, 47
- Day 5: Luke 6:46-49

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 to God in prayer and obedience to His Word.