

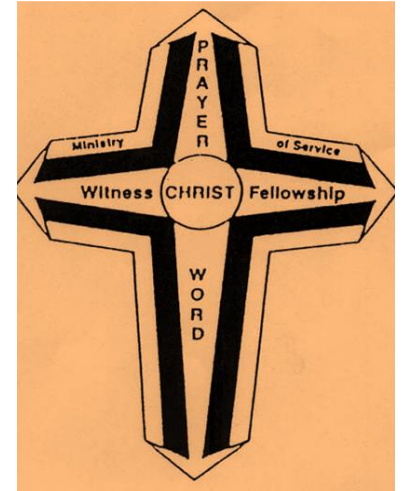
## *Discipleship Study*

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 are studying one of the five aspects of the Disciples Cross. Today, we will begin to look at how we as followers of Christ need to be in relationship with those around us.



**The Disciples Cross**

### The Disciples Cross

#### **Fellowship with Believers: Our Horizontal Relationship with People**

An obedient love relationship with Jesus will lead me into love relationships with people. I will long to fellowship with those who will build me up in faith and pray for me. Likewise, I will minister to them.

- John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- 1 John 1:3, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."
- Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

We were designed by God to be in an intimate relationship with others. In the early church (see Acts 2:42-47) we see that they experienced real fellowship with one another. The word fellowship here comes from the Greek word *Koinōnia* which implies a deep sense of belonging to one another. This same word is used to describe the relationship we experience with Christ in communion and with the Holy Spirit's presence in our life.

As Christians we should hunger and thirst for the kind of deep, authentic relationships the early church experienced. As the Holy Spirit works in us He leads to love and care for one another the way Christ has demonstrated. The kind of fruit the Spirit produces in our life (see John 15:5 and Galatians 5:22-23) will dramatically change the way we respond to one another.

Jesus never intended for you to live your life in a vacuum. You cannot live the balanced Christian life if you neglect loving relationships with others. If you try to live apart from the fellowship of other believers, called the Church, you will not experience fullness of life in Christ. The Lord has placed us into the "Body of Christ" (the Church) because sustaining life outside a body of believers is difficult. But if we stay connected to people in fellowship and if we love one another, we gain strength from one another. And as Jesus pointed out in John 13:34-35, it is throughout our love that the world will come to know Him.

- Read John 13:34 and John 15:12. How serious is Jesus about us loving one another?

**Jesus states this as a command. Loving one another is not a suggestion. It is the way of life a follower of Jesus is to live. Over and over again when confronted with questions about what God demands, and what are the greatest commandments Jesus declared that we first love God and then we love others.**

- What is our love for one another supposed to look like according to Christ?

Jesus says in John 13:34 and again in John 15:12 that our love for others should be the kind of love he has shown us. That love is unconditional, it is extravagant, it is sacrificial, it is without judgment of our past failures, it is caring and compassionate, and it is for everyone no matter who they are or where they have been.

➤ What does that spur in your heart about feeling toward other believers in your life?

For me this is crushing. My love is far too often based on this though, “what have you done for me?” My love for others is contingent on how comfortable I feel around you. My love has limits, in other words I will show you love as long as it doesn’t cross my comfort zone.

Isolation and individualism are not Christ’s ways. Christ brings believers together as a family. We should meet together regularly in homes as small groups and corporately as the Church. Worshiping together, serving together, reaching out together, praying for one another, strengthening each other with the Word of God, and helping one another by using our spiritual gifts are ways we experience *Koinōnia* and it is the way Christ designed His Church.

• Read John 17:20-22. Exactly what is Jesus praying to happen in and through us?

Jesus prays that we would be one. He prays that the world would see our love and believe in Him because that love is something the world has never known outside of Christ.

• Why do you think the world sees Jesus best through the love of His people?

Christ like love is not seen anywhere or in any other way. Jesus knows that the world is hurting for real authentic, caring, compassionate, unconditional love. When believers can demonstrate the love Jesus has shown us in our love for others the world stops and takes notice. Love of believers will stop the world in its tracks and leave them bewildered and wondering, where did that kind of love come from, I want some of that.

• Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Where do you most struggle in showing love to other believers?

Go through the points of love and see what people struggle with most.

- Being patient with others even when they are so slow to change
- Being kind in all circumstances even when others may not be kind back
- Refusing to envy what others have but being thankful instead
- Letting go of pride and boasting about ourselves
- Never being rude even when we feel we have the right
- Not seeking for ourselves needs but for the needs of others
- Not getting angered easily from things others do
- Letting go of the past and not keeping a record of wrongs
- Never delighting in evil, when others are hurt or fall we should hurt
- Rejoice in Truth (when others get it)
- Protect others as an accountable love one
- Trust others and be transparent
- Hope in prayer for God to have His way in the life of others
- Preserve through all circumstances, standing together.
- Love never fails, so even when I am let down I won’t give up on others.

• List the benefits you experience from being connected in fellowship with other believers:

- Completeness of the body
- Accountability to one another
- Encouragement during good times and bad.
- Experience the feeling of being loved unconditionally
- Fellowship with Christ.

Each day of the week I am asking you to read the scripture 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 13:1-35
- Day 2: 1 John 4:7-21
- Day 3: 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Day 4: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
- Day 5: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13