

Discipleship is not a step-by-step process but a total commitment to a lifestyle. The term discipleship in our postmodern culture can take on many different meanings depending on whom you talk to, but when referring to the Lord Jesus, the Greek word *mathetes* (disciple) refers to a student, follower, or committed learner under the instruction of a master or scholar. Throughout scripture we have an excellent example of what a disciple is and how they are to live. The original disciples and their relationship with Jesus show us the ultimate design as student and master. To understand and relate to how Jesus taught the original disciples would show us how to become better followers of Jesus, it will show us the costs of discipleship, and help us to disciple others as we were instructed by Jesus (Matthew 28.18-20 [NIV]).

Although discipleship is not a program or system there are certain aspects of becoming a disciple that are important to the process of a maturing disciple and that will lead us to become more complete and competent followers of Jesus Christ (Barna 2001). According to Barna, we become zealots for Christ through teaching, training, experiences, relationships, and accountability and this is exactly what Jesus did with the original twelve disciples during his earthly ministry. There are almost countless examples of this in scripture but one comes from the Sermon on the Mount where scripture says “his disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:” (Matthew 5.1-2). In one of the longest sermons recorded Jesus went almost step-by-step through parables, stories, instructions for living the Christian life. This was not how to start a new career path, how to create a new program in the temple, or interesting entertainment of the day, this was instruction from master to student on how to live out a new lifestyle, a new lifestyle that was devoted entirely to God.

Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus he also taught his disciples that there would be a cost to following Him. This cannot be more evident than in Luke 14.25-35. Through two parables Jesus explains to the crowd how they should consider the cost of becoming a disciple. If anyone doesn't hate his family, carry his cross, and in the ultimate cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus, anyone who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14.33).

In addition to the cost of following Jesus, from The Great Commission, we learn no disciple is complete until he takes what he has learned and follows the command "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28.19). As Barna explains, we have a great example in Paul who has all the marks of a true disciple. Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, he then spent time being trained as a disciple, and then went out and made disciples of people for as far as he could reach. Paul is of course not the only example but one that shows us that it can be done. As stated in John 15.8, you will know a disciple by the fruit they bear and Paul's ministry certainly showed the marks of a true disciple.

If you subscribe to the philosophy of Christianity, discipleship making is not an optional endeavor but a change to a specific lifestyle. To be true disciples of Jesus Christ we need to follow his commands, expect there to be a cost to becoming disciples of Jesus and be committed to creating disciples in others for the viability of the Christian faith and the Church body as a whole.