

Daily Devotionals: With Jesus and His Wisdom | February 27, 2022

Day 1: Devotion

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.”

The above passage represents Jesus’ last recorded words to his followers and can be found in Matthew 28:18-20. In this small passage, Jesus gives his followers three big responsibilities – to make disciples, baptize those disciples, and teach those disciples to obey everything he has commanded. The early church must have taken Jesus’ words seriously as Acts 6:7 tells us, “*So the word of the Lord spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*”

The Creek finds the charge of disciple-making so important that it is included in our mission statement: “Love God, Love People, Make Disciples.”

- But what does it mean to “make disciples” or, for that matter, to be a disciple? Without reading ahead or checking other resources, write down your present understanding.

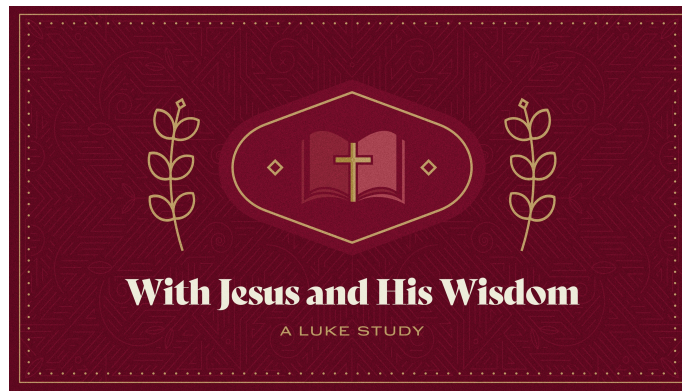
If your answer includes any reference to being a student or learner, you are on the right track. ‘Disciple’ comes to us from the Latin word *discipulus*, which means “pupil, student, follower.” Due to its pervasiveness in the Bible, its present-day use has come to mean those who actively seek to follow Jesus’ teaching and example. In short, a disciple is a Christian who has made a high level of commitment to Jesus. Does this describe you?

A close cousin of ‘disciple’ is ‘discipline.’ Just reading that word can make us bristle. It conjures up images of exercise or punishment, or maybe you consider *those* words as synonymous! Yet, just as it takes discipline to be a good student and to learn well, it also takes discipline to become a properly formed follower of Jesus.

- What does ‘discipline’ mean to you? What kind of images come to mind as you think about that word?

Discipline, writes Dallas Willard,

“... is in fact a natural part of the structure of the human soul, and almost nothing of any significance in education, culture, or other attainments is achieved without it.



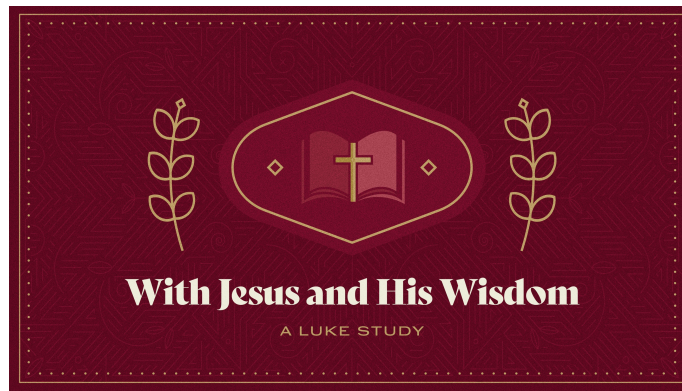
*Everything from learning a language to weight-lifting depends upon it, and its availability in the human makeup is what makes the individual human being responsible for the kind of person he or she becomes.” (Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. HarperCollins, 2006.)*

Dr. Willard’s point seems to be this: you cannot get to where you want to go without discipline. You cannot simply wish for something to be true – learn a new language, get fit, or become a disciple – it requires continual and consistent effort. If you want to learn a new language, it takes discipline. You need to take classes, listen to lessons, practice your vocabulary and conjugations, and immerse yourself in that culture, until you reach the point of conversing in, and understanding, a new language. If you want to transition from couch potato to distance runner, it takes discipline. You must start eating smarter, stretching, following a plan, and slowly building to the point where you can participate in a 10k run. And if you want to be transformed into Jesus’ disciple, you guessed it, it takes discipline. Maybe this involves getting out of bed earlier than the norm to engage in prayer, scripture reading and devotional time. Maybe you join a Rooted group and enter into a community of fellow believers who will encourage, love and support you. There are quite literally dozens of potential activities in which you can engage that will make you a more effective apprentice of Jesus.

- What kinds of things have I done in my past to grow my relationship with someone?
Think about dating, marriage, parenting, co-workers, neighbors, etc.

Did it involve intentionality? Did it require effort? Did it demand some time? Did it ask for sacrifice? I hope you answered in the affirmative to all these questions. Getting to know Jesus better works the same way. After all, it is a relationship between you and him and it requires something of you, especially if you desire for the relationship to be healthy and robust. In short, if you want to become like Jesus you need to know what Jesus is like, which, like all good relationships, requires intentionality, effort, time, and sacrifice.

- What are the activities you presently do that help you to grow closer to Jesus? What are some things you would like to introduce to your life that will produce that desired effect? What is holding you back from doing these things?
- Take time now to ask God to show you how to be closer to him.



Day 2: Study Breakdown

Yesterday you examined what the word disciple, and its derivatives, means and what it is you have done, or would like to do, to grow your relationship with Christ. Today, you are going to dive into this week's passage - Luke 14:25-35 - and gain a better understanding of Jesus' expectations for those who call themselves disciples.

In the preceding passage - the 'Parable of the Great Banquet' (14:15-24) – Jesus casts a wide net to invite all to the table. Those in the streets and alleys, roads and country lanes, the poor, crippled, blind, and lame are all invited so that Jesus' "house will be full." In this week's passage, Jesus sets forth three conditions of discipleship.

²⁵ "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. He turned and spoke to them. He said, ²⁶ "Anyone who comes to me must hate their father and mother. They must hate their wife and children. They must hate their brothers and sisters. And they must hate even their own life. Unless they do this, they can't be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever doesn't carry their cross and follow me can't be my disciple.

²⁸ "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you sit down first and figure out how much it will cost? Then you will see whether you have enough money to finish it. ²⁹ Suppose you start building and are not able to finish. Then everyone who sees what you have done will laugh at you. ³⁰ They will say, 'This person started to build but wasn't able to finish.'

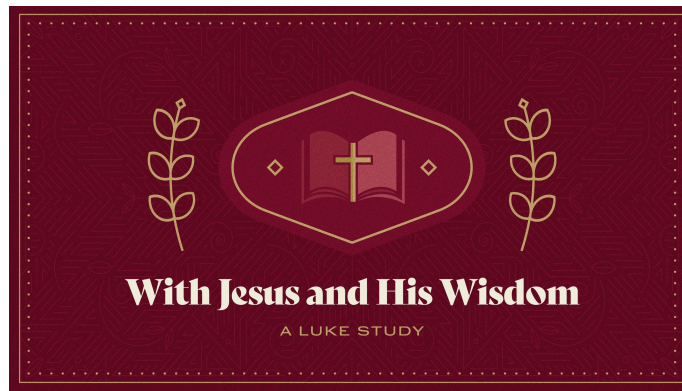
³¹ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. And suppose he has 10,000 men, while the other has 20,000 coming against him. Won't he first sit down and think about whether he can win? ³² And suppose he decides he can't win. Then he will send some men to ask how peace can be made. He will do this while the other king is still far away. ³³ In the same way, you must give up everything you have. Those of you who don't cannot be my disciple.

³⁴ "Salt is good. But suppose it loses its saltiness. How can it be made salty again? ³⁵ It is not good for the soil. And it is not good for the trash pile. It will be thrown out.

"Whoever has ears should listen."

The Willingness to Leave Family Ties (verse 26)

Yikes! Whatever does Jesus mean by his followers having to hate their family in order to be his disciple? You find, perhaps, a more palatable parallel in Matthew 10:37-38: "Anyone who loves



their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not pick up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Regardless of your passage preference, Jesus’ point remains the same – you are to love him more than your earthly relationships and, yes, even more than your own life. Jesus is not asking you to abandon family loyalties or the commandment to honor your mother and father. Instead, he is emphasizing the relativism of your relationship with him and others. Jesus seems to be saying only those who are capable of a radical and painful decision, to make all human relations secondary to the relationship with him, can really be his disciple.

- Offer an assessment of your love of Jesus in comparison to those relationships you esteem on earth. Name those earthly relationships. How do they compare? Does your love of Jesus exceed your love of your children? Your spouse? Your parents? Your career? Your education? Your social status? Your hobbies? In what ways can you grow your relationship with Christ and make him *the* highest priority of your life?

The Willingness to Face Radical Self-Denial (verse 27)

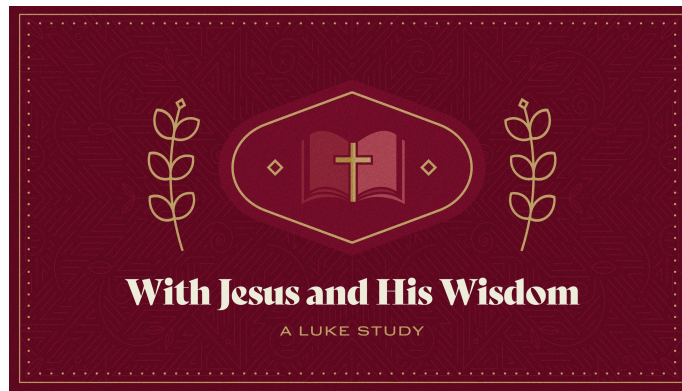
Luke also quotes “Whoever doesn’t carry their cross and follow me can’t be my disciple” in 9:23 and you can find parallels in Matthew 10:38, Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34. Crucifixion was a well-known method of execution in Roman Palestine, so Jesus and his audience would have been familiar with the metaphor and the sacrifice and suffering it entailed.

Jesus is asking you to sacrifice certain elements of your life – those that come into conflict with the command to follow him – in order to be his disciple. This means more than giving up simple pleasures – electronics, coffee, more sleep – but living each day for Christ rather than self.

- What do you think Jesus means by demanding that *you* carry *your* cross? What cross(es) are you carrying in your own life? How does this cross-bearing draw you into deeper fellowship with Jesus?

The Willingness to Give Up One’s Material Possessions (verses 28-33)

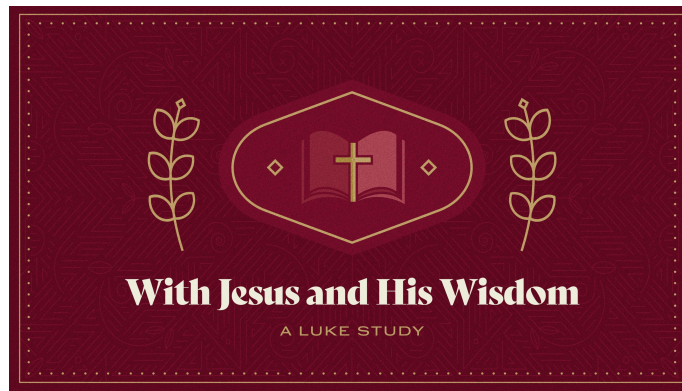
Jesus now offers twin parables to help illuminate the conditions of discipleship. As a disciple, you need to assess the demands of discipleship and the consequences of not meeting those demands. Discipleship will cost you. The Message version of the Bible interprets verse 33 this



way: “Simply put, if you’re not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people, and kiss it good-bye, you can’t be my disciple.” There is a cost associated with following the example and teachings of Jesus. Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers this:

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*. The Macmillan Company, 1937.)

- By choosing discipleship to Jesus, what will it cost you? Think about family ties, friendships, finances, material possessions, time, and the like. Are you prepared to sacrifice these things?
- It has been written that the cost of discipleship is great, but the cost of non-discipleship is greater. What do you think this means? What costs of non-discipleship are you and your family bearing? Have you weighed these costs relative to the costs of discipleship? If so, what is your conclusion?
- Spend time with God asking him to reveal what you may need to eliminate, or at least re-prioritize, in your life.



Day 3: Scripture Survey

In Day 2, you learned of Jesus' expectations for his disciples – to love him more than anyone and everything else, to jettison those areas of your life that impede your ability and willingness to be his disciple, and to be prepared to bear the cost of discipleship. Today, you will review some of Jesus' statements about being a disciple.

While the word *Christian* is used only three times in the Bible (see Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16), *disciple* and its derivatives are used approximately three hundred times. If it's repeated, it's important! Read again Luke 14:25-35 and compare Jesus' expectation of you there with the passages below. Consider the following questions as you ruminate on these passages.

- What was Jesus inviting his disciples into?
- What is Jesus inviting you into?
- Are you prepared to accept that invitation?

Matthew 9:9

⁹ “As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting in the tax collector's office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.”

Matthew 12:46-50

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” ⁴⁸ He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Mark 1:17

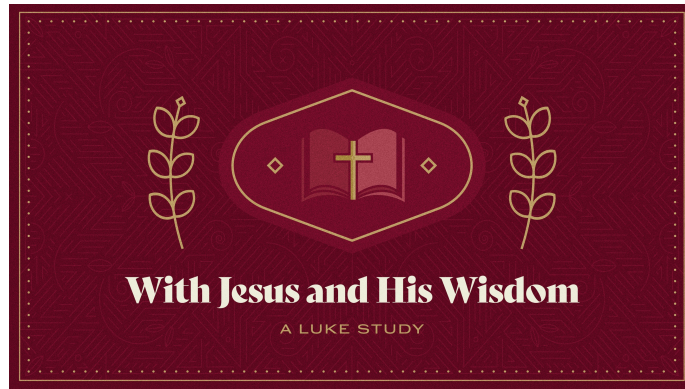
¹⁷ “And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will have you become fishers of people.”

Luke 6:40

⁴⁰ “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.”

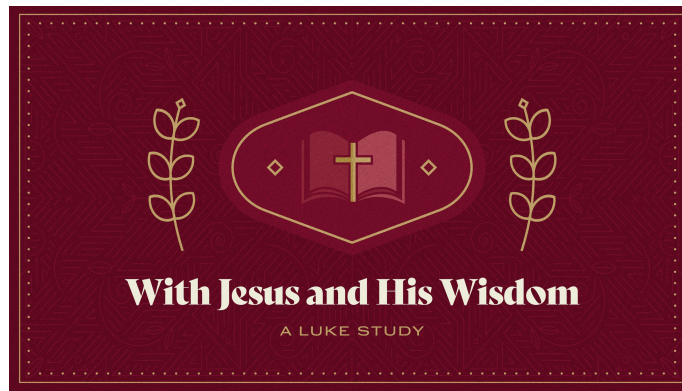
John 8:31-32

³¹ “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”



John 13:34-35

³⁴“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”



Day 4: Story Work

This week you have learned much about discipleship: what it means, Jesus' expectations of his disciples, and what Jesus had to say about discipleship elsewhere in Scripture. Today you will reflect on the influences that have shaped you into the person you are today. Whether you know it or not, or like it or not, you are constantly being shaped spiritually. The question is this: into what are you being shaped? Dallas Willard writes,

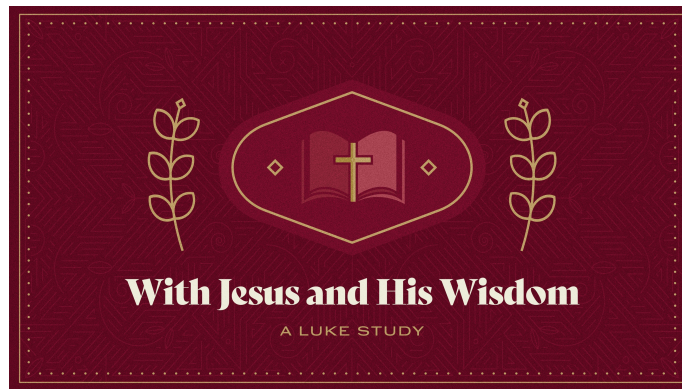
"It is one of the major transitions of life to recognize WHO has taught us, mastered us, and then to evaluate the results in us of their teaching. This is a harrowing task, and sometimes we just can't face it. but it can also open the door to choose other masters, possibly better masters, and one Master above all." (Willard, Dallas. The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God. HarperCollins, 1997)

One thing you can be certain of: you have always been a disciple of someone(s) and something(s). You have learned how to live your life through the teaching and example of external sources. You learned to walk by mimicking others. You were introduced to language by your family. You elevated your reading and writing skills through the guidance of teachers. Your ideas have been shaped by exposure to family, media, books, professors, and friendships. Evil and heartbreak have been formative. The list could go on and on. The point is this: there is little neutrality in your life. The messages you hear, the words you read, the media you view, and the interactions you have all have moved (and are moving and will continue to move) the needle one way or the other – either towards Christlikeness or away from it.

- Who and what has taught you?
- On a case-by-case basis, assess whether this teaching has moved you into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus, or not.
- Are you a disciple of Jesus? In other words, is he your teacher and master? If yes, what is the evidence of that? If not, what do you need to do to elevate Jesus to teacher/master status?

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:1-4)

- No matter the answer to the questions above, what elements of your life need pruning in order to move towards Christlikeness?
- Compare today's responses to those from Day 2.



Day 5: Hear & Do

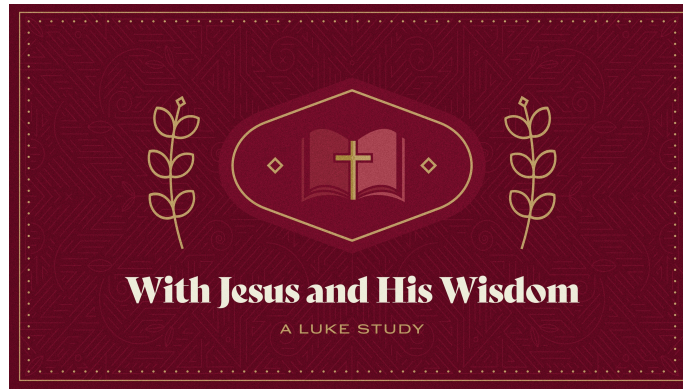
“A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain ... This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines - they are a way of sowing to the Spirit ... By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done.” (Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, HarperCollins, 1978)

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

I once heard a member of our church compare discipleship to a sailboat. For a sailboat to sail effectively, it needs to have certain characteristics: a hull shaped to cut through the waves, a keel that supports stability, masts by which to hoist the sails, sails to catch the wind and propel the boat forward, to name but a few. You can be a passenger on the most splendidly constructed sailboat in the world, but it is of little value without wind to move you forward. In many ways spiritual disciplines are like a sailboat. Your life needs to be designed in a way that creates the right conditions for the spirit of God to catch your sails and create movement – into deeper fellowship with Jesus.

Today, you’re going to revisit your ‘Rule of Life’ (if you haven’t made one yet, a guide can be found at thecreek.org/spiritualpractices) – think of this practice as the right conditions for the wind to catch your sails and move you towards Christlikeness. In this practice, you were asked to reflect on 2021 and invite God to show you where you have been, how far you had traveled during the year. Now that we are two months into 2022, it’s time for a wellness check. Like a budget, a ‘Rule of Life’ may require periodic adjustments.

Experts tell us there is a powerful connection between writing something down (think paper and pen) and the brain. Apparently, the brain’s reticular activating system is stimulated as we write and provokes enhanced recall and focus. So, in that spirit, transfer your ‘Rule of Life’ to the chart below (transfer ALL the list, whether it reflects your experience thus far, or not).



Daily	Weekly	Monthly or Quarterly	Yearly

- How is it going? Are you doing the daily disciplines? What about weekly? Have you planned/completed your monthly/quarterly aspirations?
- If yes, great job, keep it up!
- Do you need to make any adjustments? If yes, cross out those items that have not been life-giving (i.e., feel more like an obligation) and you would like to eliminate going forward.
- Review the list once again and determine what is missing. Based upon your responses over the course of the days 1-4, what would you like to introduce to your life rhythm? Write in your responses.
- Review the list. Is it realistic? Is it so much that it will produce frustration if you do not accomplish the goals as set out? Yet are the disciplines challenging enough to promote real life change? Make the appropriate adjustments.
- Set a reminder on your calendar to complete this reassessment exercise again in two months (and maybe periodically after that).

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:37)