

A Journey with Jesus
Book 1

Fishers of Men

“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

Michael Gibson

A Journey with Jesus

Book 1 – Fishers of Men

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Denver, Colorado 80221
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3rd Printing 2017

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: TX-7-334-703

International Standard Book Number: 978-0-9654179-1-4

Scripture excerpts from the following resource:

Follow Me **“A Message from God”**

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 96-094630

International Standard Book Number: 0-9654179-0-5

The Story

The most incredible story in the universe is God’s dealings with men. The story is told using seven types of literature woven together in one account called the Bible. These seven types of literature are divided into three groups commonly called the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Gospels. The Old Testament consists of three types of writing called: *The Law*, *The Prophets*, and *The Writings*. This group’s primary function is to point forward to the Messiah (or Savior). The New Testament also consists of three types of writing known as *The Acts of the Apostles*, *the Epistles (or Letters)*, and *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. This group’s primary function is to unfold the benefits that come from the Messiah. The final group, the Gospels, form the central and pivotal part of the story, which concerns the Messiah and the purposes for which He was sent to earth. The Gospels primary function is to blend both the Old and New Testaments into one account through the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

The Law	
The Prophets	The Old Testament
The Writings	
The Gospels	The Messiah
The Acts of the Apostles	
The Epistles	The New Testament
The Revelation of Jesus Christ	

The focus of my book is the central part of that story, the Gospels. This portion of the story is told by four men, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who each wrote an account of Messiah. Matthew's gospel is the most detailed and views things from a Hebraic mindset. Luke's gospel is written in chronological order and John's gospel reveals significant spiritual truths. Mark wrote the first gospel and it serves as the glue that binds all the others together. It is through their eyes, ears, and hearts that each one of us is able to see the works that God performed through Messiah, to hear the "good news" that He is proclaiming, and to understand the depth of His love for mankind.

The Purpose

The purpose of my writing this book is to forge the four gospels into one seamless story so that the reader may more fully understand the events that surround the Messiah and His coming to earth. It is my intent to make you feel like you are walking with Jesus and being taught by Him on His journey through life.

Besides combining the four gospels into one story other significant features have been included to increase the reader's awareness and understanding:

Two Unique Features

Just prior to His being raised up into heaven Jesus gave his followers a commission to accomplish before He returned again. That commission was to, "**Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them in the name** of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In response to the commission to teach others to observe all that Jesus commanded. I have highlighted in bold type all the instructions that He gave His group of disciples.

All of the instructions Jesus gave His disciples are contained in lessons which He was teaching them. The fifty-eight lessons that Jesus taught them can be found in the companion teaching series entitled: "*A Journey with Jesus.*" The teaching series consists of three books: "*Fishers of Men,*" "*Into the Harvest*" and "*Building the Temple.*"

Other Features

Chronology: All the events in this book are in the order in which they occurred and were derived from side by side comparisons of the four gospel accounts and various harmonies of the gospels.

Dating: The dates of events in this book assist the reader in discovering the time frames in which Jesus' story unfolds.

Divisions: The book has been divided into 18 parts in order to help the reader see the “big picture” of Jesus’ life and mission.

Headings: Each part of the book is further subdivided into specific events occurring within the life of Jesus.

Heading references (in parenthesis): Indicate the actual Scriptural passages used in the text under that heading.

Footnoting: Footnote references occur at the end of each part. Those referencing words or phrases are in regular type. Those referencing passages of scripture are in italicized type.

Glossary: The glossary contains comments on or definitions of commonly used words or terms used throughout the text.

Scripture: The text is taken directly from the New American Standard Bible.

To the Reader

Not everyone will agree with every position taken in this work, however, many knowledgeable sources were consulted in its preparation. This book is not meant to replace the individual accounts of the gospel writers, but merely to serve as a supplement to them. Date setting of various events is based on historical documents, astronomical evidence, the Jewish calendar with its 19 year repeating cycles, the Feasts of the Lord and the customs of the Jewish people. To those who have labored long in the study of God’s Word and prepared helps for each of us to learn by, I extend thanksgiving and gratitude for their labor of love in Christ.

My Hope

My heart's desire is that my Father in heaven be glorified by the exaltation of His Son in this book and that each of you, the readers, be transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Testimonials

Thanks for sharing the work of God in Odisha (*eastern India*) ... it was a real life transforming moment for me. In your teaching and training I could see and feel the fullest power and the presence of God. I take special delight in studying your designed notes and explain them to my disciples and many others ... I am using your discipleship material very well in my effort ... I have committed and dedicated my life to making disciples of Jesus Christ here in Odisha, India.

Rev. Kartik P.

Disciple Maker and Pastor in Eastern India

I was a Youth & Young Adult Pastor for 10 years, attended some of the best training & courses, steeped in the best ministry the world had to offer. Then I began to walk through this discipleship material, learning the teachings of Jesus ... I was undone. No church, seminar, book, curriculum, speaker, class, or convention has EVER taught me what I have learned through this material – what our Messiah was REALLY saying to us ... and WHY. I am forever changed – I have come awake, come alive, & I want more!

Brandon S.

Financial Advisor & Former Youth/Young Adults Pastor

The discipleship series *A Journey with Jesus* changed my life. If you really want to learn how to live and walk as Jesus did and learn how to become a disciple maker, this study is it. It can truly change your life.

Michelle M.

Homemaker, Mom & Disciple Maker

A Journey with Jesus curriculum is entirely Christ centered and God honoring. I highly recommend to people that are making the decision to follow Jesus Christ as a believer to commit to reading and studying the Word of God using this tool.

Noah G.

Entrepreneur & Former Missionary

Now I am discipling others and I find the teaching component to be even more of a blessing than when I was on the learning end. It is a straightforward practical guide to discipleship that is needed in today's church. This is a great way to jump start the calling on every Christians life to carry out the Great Commission.

Brandon B.

Realtor & Disciple Maker

Testimonials Continued: *"The Heartbeat of Discipleship"* – [Read More Amazing Testimonials from around the World](http://www.key2changes.com/testimonials-continued.html) (www.key2changes.com/testimonials-continued.html)

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Author's Intent

My purpose in preparing the teaching series entitled *A Journey with Jesus* is to help you become a more effective disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that by continually pointing you to what Jesus said and your willingness to do what He said, your life will be completely transformed. Then you will truly become as He is.

The goal of my teaching is to let the Scriptures speak for themselves while providing you with a 1st Century Christian mindset. The mindset is developed by drawing upon the Old Testament themes, traditions, rituals, concepts and insights that Jesus' original disciples would have understood.

At times, my teaching might appear as if I were indicating a return to Mosaic Law. Let me assure you, that is not the case! I believe that Christians are saved by the grace of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, not by obeying the Law of Moses. However, I am also keenly aware that to many people the term "saved by grace" has come to mean that they can live their lives in a manner they so choose. This also is not the case! Christians are called to be a holy people, not to live lawless lives, thus perverting the grace of God. Instead, they are to live by the Law of the Spirit, which is to love God and man. Jesus said, "*If you love Me, you will keep **My** commandments.*"

A Journey with Jesus was not intended to be a scholarly work or a commentary on Scripture but rather designed to be thought provoking and life changing. It was prepared for the joy and benefit of the average Christian who trusts the Holy Spirit to lead and guide him into all truth.

My prayer is that this series will be a useful tool in helping you live a fruitful life in Christ.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to my wife Janice for her steadfast love, encouragement and support of me throughout the years. Without it this work would not have been completed. And I wish to further acknowledge her artistic abilities to paint the artwork that so inspiringly graces the covers of *A Journey with Jesus*.

Message from the Author's Co-laborer in the Discipleship Ministry

It is with a heart full of rich and unforgettable memories that I share with you the loss of the Author of this 3-book discipleship-making series of Jesus' own *teachings, methods, and model*, Michael Gibson, both my disciple-maker of 26-years and stepfather of 35-years, who passed away in early-2019, following an eight-year battle with cancer.

In my stepfather's own words, "*Ryan, you are the future of this message; you will see and do even greater things than I have done, in fulfillment that the Lord spoke to me when I first started this Journey of discovering the art of Disciple Making; these teachings of Jesus will reach the entire world, which I could have never imagined in my life-time, but I know will be fulfilled in yours. Go, Make Disciples, teach them to observe everything Jesus commanded them to do; I love you.*"

Tears of joy fill my eyes just writing these words, even more emboldened than ever to the work and mission ahead, of a Harvest that is truly plentiful, that within just the first three-years of his passing, we have seen this "*Journey with Jesus*" discipleship training grow from just 5 disciple-

makers to over 100 disciple-makers, now actively “Making Disciples” in the following regions: right here in the United States, Odisha (*India*), Telengana (*India*), Manipur (*India*), Varanasi (*India*), Kathmandu (*Nepal*), Macedonia (*southeastern Europe*), Albania (*southeastern Europe*), Uganda (*Africa*), Kenya (*Africa*), England, Turkey, and Iran; with **thousands** of *known* individuals currently being discipled throughout the span of the above listed regions, both in-person and online; with a track-record that forecasts exponential future growth around the world, and in many additional translated languages.

The 3-Book Series: “A Journey with Jesus”, developed out of Jesus’ own Discipleship Training, in His own *Words*, His own *Methods*, and His own *Model*, commissioned to all of His followers through His Great Commission to “**Make Disciples . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**,” Matthew 28:19-20, was written by Michael Gibson for the purpose of the Great Commission to “**Make Disciples**”, has taken Jesus’ identified 263 commands and formatted them into 58 teaching lessons, from Jesus’ very first commandment to “**Follow Me**”, to His very final commandment to “**Make Disciples**”. First printed in 2012, today, through the implementation of one-on-one and small group “*Disciple Making*”, teaching individuals and groups to begin to observe everything Jesus has commanded and in turn teach others to observe, has resulted in the active language *Translations* of the 3-book series in the subsequent languages and corresponding regions, following Michael’s death in 2019:

1. **Complete Version** in the language of Spanish (**Un Viaje Con Jesús** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 370 million spoken worldwide), translated right here in Colorado (which was the first language the 3-book series, “*A Journey with Jesus*”, was translated into, which began being translated just before Michael’s passing and completed the summer following his passing).
2. **Complete Version** in the language of Slavic (**Патување со Исус** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 315 million spoken worldwide), translated out of a group of disciple makers in *Macedonia*.
3. **Complete Version** in the language of Albanian (**Një udhëtim me Jezuin** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 7.6 million spoken worldwide), translated out of a group of disciple makers in *Albania*.
4. **Complete Version** in the language of Hindi (**यीशु के साथ एक यात्रा** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 50 million spoken worldwide), translated out of a group of disciple makers in *Varanasi, India*, the **Hindu** Mecca of India, who were introduced to “*Making Disciples*” by a Senior Director of a local Christian non-profit, one of our New Disciple Makers right here in Colorado Springs, CO, who during the beginnings of the global-Pandemic of 2020 and into 2021, has come to know of over 2,000 New Disciples.
5. **Complete Version** in the language of Odia (**କ୍ରିଷ୍ଟଙ୍କ ସହ ଏକ ଯାତ୍ରା** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 50 million spoken worldwide), translated by our Regional Director of the country of India, Pastor Kartik, our first International Disciple back in 2012, out of *Odisha, India* (the most persecuted State in the Country of India of Christians), who today has over 1,300 Disciples, 50 Disciple Makers, and 38 Church Plants.
6. **Complete Version** in the language of Telugu (**యేసుతో ఒక ప్రయాణం** / *A Journey with Jesus* – 70 million spoken worldwide), translated by Pastor Venu and his team of disciple makers out of *Telangana, India*, who I began discipling through the discipleship “*Journey with Jesus*” online back in June of 2021.

7. **Complete Version** in the language of Farsi (سفری با عیسی / A Journey with Jesus – 110 million spoken worldwide), the language of Iran, and many other middle eastern countries by a Translator out of Turkey, within the network of a ministry reaching the country of Iran.
8. Currently being translated into the language of Nepali (येशूसितको यात्रा / A Journey with Jesus – 17 million spoken worldwide), by a translator in Kathmandu, Nepal, through the coordinated efforts of our new Regional Director in Nepal, Jason & Leah Madlom, missionaries we met on a mountain-top in Nepal, introducing the Discipleship material to over 115 local pastors ministering in the mountain-top village Regions of Nepal, when Ryan was there in late 2019.
9. Currently being translated into the language of Swahili (Safari na Yesu / A Journey with Jesus – 200 million spoken worldwide), by one of our own disciples in an eastern town in Kenya, called Matuda, who pastors and oversees several congregations in the town, and whom I began discipling through the discipleship “Journey with Jesus” back in April of 2021.
10. Currently being translated into the language of Bengali (যীশুর সাথে একটি যাত্রা / A Journey with Jesus – 273 million spoken worldwide), through the coordinated efforts of our new Regional Director in Nepal, Jason & Leah Madlom, missionaries we met on a mountain-top in Nepal, introducing the Discipleship material to over 115 local pastors ministering in the mountain-top village Regions of Nepal, when Ryan was there in late 2019.
11. Currently being translated into the language of Indonesian (Sebuah Perjalanan dengan Yesus / A Journey with Jesus – 198 million spoken worldwide), through the coordinated efforts of our new Regional Director in Nepal, Jason & Leah Madlom, missionaries we met on a mountain-top in Nepal, introducing the Discipleship material to over 115 local pastors ministering in the mountain-top village Regions of Nepal, when Ryan was there in late 2019.
12. Today, Jesus’ own Discipleship Training, “A Journey with Jesus”, to fulfill the Great Commission of “**Making Disciples**”, through the Discipleship efforts and Translation work above, now have the potential to be read by **2.4 billion** people worldwide.

Added to this latest version of a “Journey with Jesus – Fishers of Men” we have included Michael’s scholarly work in his singular account of the Gospels, “Follow Me – A Message from God”, which he had just completed the Revised version before his passing, with new and updated footnotes, additional doctrinal teaching articles from Michael’s archives, and a user-friendly format to enhance the “Journey with Jesus” discipleship-making experience and impact.

We look forward to the **Legacy** continuing, *without-bound*, in *Answer* of the Lord’s prayer request of His people, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers (disciple-makers) are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers (disciple-makers) into His harvest,*” Matthew 9:37-38, of which you are an *Answer* to that earnest prayer; and now in the words of Jesus Himself:

“**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**” Matthew 4:19

Ryan Roberts, President of Key2Changes

Introduction

Expressions of Love

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach ...*

So read the opening lines of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's love sonnet to her husband.

People respond to love. The words of love are music to our ears. Receiving love brings joy to our lives. Human beings thrive on love because we are created in the image of God, who is love. And each of us was created to be an expression of love.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”¹

Jesus Christ, the Son of God spoke these words to His disciples on the night before He died. A few hours later Jesus would express His love for every man by becoming the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. On that night however, Jesus explained to His disciples that the way to express love towards Him; was the same way He expressed love to His Father in heaven during His lifetime. *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.*²

“Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”³

These were the final words that Jesus spoke to His followers before ascending into heaven. Jesus chose His words carefully. They were important words, memorable and intended for lasting impact. Study them for just a moment!

Two questions come to mind immediately. What did Jesus command His disciples to do? Why is it so important to teach others to do as He commanded? The answers to these questions are the heart of the disciple making process used by Jesus.

During the three-year period of His ministry on earth, Jesus took ordinary men and women who followed Him and transformed them into powerful disciples. Within twenty years of His ascension into heaven they had become known throughout the Roman Empire as “those who have turned the world upside down.” They had truly become expressions of God's love on earth.

What happened to them to cause such a great impact on the world? It's simple. Jesus gave His disciples only one task; make more disciples. He told them exactly how to do it. They did what Jesus told them to do and He sent the Holy Spirit to help them do it! The rest is history.

Jesus' five-step disciple making process was simple. Go, preach, baptize, and teach.

1. **Stay** until you are clothed with power from on high.
2. **Go** into the entire world.
3. **Preach** the gospel to all creation.
4. **Baptize** those who have believed, in the name of Jesus.

¹ John 14:15

² John 15:10

³ Matthew 28:20

5. **Teach** all those who have believed and are baptized, to do everything that I have told you to do.

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

What is a disciple?

By definition, a disciple is a **learner**; one who puts into practice what he or she has been taught. Jesus said it this way. *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher and the slave as his master.”*⁴ Therefore, the goal of a disciple of Jesus Christ is to become as He is . . . having the same values, character, goals, desires and mission.

What is discipleship?

From a Christian perspective, discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus. It is the transformation from “learner” to “teacher.” Some churches refer to discipleship as spiritual growth or spiritual maturity or spiritual transformation. It involves changing the way the learner thinks and acts, so that he becomes conformed to the image of the teacher. The Apostle Paul said. *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*⁵

How is the mind renewed?

The key word is having a renewed mind is **repentance**.⁶ Most Christians associate this word with either their salvation (Repent and believe the gospel) or giving up their sins (Repent of your sins). However, it simply means to change the way you think or believe.

In our everyday lives this is happening all the time. For example, we get more facts or information on a particular subject, which allows us to change the way we think about the subject. Sometimes we hear an exclamation like, “Wow, I never really thought about it like that before” but in most cases we just assimilate the information daily, which in turn affects our general belief system.

All of us are affected to some extent by what we hear. Jesus even cautioned His disciples to be careful what they listened to⁷ because he knew that it would affect their hearts and minds. As Christians we need to remember that both the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world are being ruled by words. Satan is able to usurp rulership over the kingdoms of this world because people believe his words, which are lies and then are passed on. God’s kingdom advances when His words are believed, acted upon and then passed on.

In the information age we live in today, we are constantly bombarded with words all day long. If Christians are to advance the Kingdom of God it is imperative that they repent or replace the lies they have believed in with the truth of God’s Word. The replacement occurs by acting in faith towards God’s words. True Biblical faith has three parts to it before it is complete:

1. Believing the word of God as truth in the heart,

⁴ Matthew 10:24-25

⁵ Romans 12:2

⁶ **Repentance**. Simply defined as, “*stop doing it your way and start doing it God’s way.*”

⁷ Mark 4:24 and Luke 8:18

2. Confessing the word of God to others, and
3. Acting upon what the word God says to do.

By using a combination of the three learning styles: audio, visual and kinetic, the rate at which the mind can be renewed can be increased. First you tell the person how to do it, then you show the person how to do it and then you let them do it. One example of renewing a mind is when we teach a child how to tie his shoelaces. First we tell them how to do it, we demonstrate how to do it and finally we have them do it . . . over and over and over again until it comes second nature to them. When the child grows to the point where he teaches others how to tie their shoes he has become like his teacher or in other words, he has been disciplined. Jesus used this process with His disciples all the time.

Is the discipleship process systematic?

I believe the answer to this question is yes. People raise their children systematically. For example, people teach their children to walk before they teach them to run. Then they teach them to play baseball before they teach them to manage a baseball team. The entire human learning process is systematic and even the Bible concurs with that . . . *“For God says, ‘Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.’”*⁸

Jesus never took a haphazard approach in making disciples. He was intentional in everything He did; from those he called to be the twelve apostles, to the methods and order of their training, to the time that it took to train them and to their final empowering by the Holy Spirit. The teaching series, *A Journey with Jesus* seeks to follow that pattern.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the discipleship process?

Let’s start by saying that in order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ you must be taught by Him. This is one of primary reasons that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to reside within Christians, to teach them what He, the Word of God says.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but **whatever He hears, He will speak**; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*⁹

Christians sometimes have strange ideas when it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit in their own lives. Let’s look at a few examples of erroneous belief. Some say they don’t need to know what the Scriptures say since the Holy Spirit will lead them. This cannot be true because 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All Scripture¹⁰ is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*

Some Christians say that they don’t need anyone to teach them because the Holy Spirit will do it. In some respects this is true, however the Scripture also says *that Jesus Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the*

⁸ Isaiah 28:10

⁹ John 16:13

¹⁰ Scripture means, “that which is written”.

knowledge of the Son of God.¹¹ So, until we **all** attain to the **unity** of the faith and **knowledge** of the Son of God then these God ordained ministries will remain.

Many Christians expect the Holy Spirit to get them to where they need to be without any effort on their own part. Jesus said, “*When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.*” Notice that Jesus didn’t say that the Holy Spirit would drive His people into all truth but rather to guide them. It is a **joint** effort; the Holy Spirit leads, God’s people follow. This implies that it takes faith and obedience to follow the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 says, “*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*”

How many disciples did Jesus have?

Jesus had many disciples, both men and women. Of His disciples, He called twelve men to be His apostles (sent ones). Ten days after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, the Bible records that 120 of His disciples gathered together on the Feast of Shavuot, which is known as Pentecost in the Church. On that day the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to speak in the languages of the people who had come to the feast from other lands. Then Peter preached the gospel to these people. Three thousand believed his message and were baptized. Then, the apostles started going from house to house, where believers were gathering in small groups, teaching them what Jesus had commanded them to do.

What is required to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

1. **Believe** the gospel message concerning Jesus, that He is both Lord and Savior. By believing, a person is “born again” into the family of God. This requires an act of repentance – a change from what was formerly believed.
2. Be **baptized**. By this act a person declares that he has been “born again by the Spirit of God” and is now “saved”. Jesus said, “*He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved.*”¹²
3. Be **willing** to receive Jesus’ instructions.
4. **Sacrifice** time to be trained.
5. **Learn** the commands of Jesus.
6. **Apply** what He says to do.
7. Be **led** by the Spirit of God. According to the Apostle Paul, those who are being led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

What format is best used to make disciples?

Small groups of 5 to 15 individuals make ideal places to learn and grow. They provide the best opportunities for people to practice the one another’s, be accountable, learn and accomplish tasks.

Can a person terminate or interrupt the process of becoming a disciple?

The answer to this question is yes. One example of this is in John 6:53-66. Many of Jesus’ disciples withdrew from Him. They simply could not believe that Jesus required them, to “eat His body and drink His blood.” In the Church today, this requirement is known as communion or the Lord’s Supper.

¹¹ Ephesians 4:11-13

¹² Mark 16:16

How long does it take to become a disciple?

Let's begin answering this question by saying, that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a life-long process. However, some significant degree of spiritual maturity seems to have been achieved within the first three-year period after an individual's conversion. Consider the following:

1. Jesus spent three years training His disciples before they were considered spiritually mature enough to "make disciples."
2. In Acts 1:8, we discover that Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth. According to most historians, there was a ten-year period between Peter's preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem until he preached to Cornelius, a gentile, in Caesarea. When Cornelius, a representative of Rome, was baptized it marked the beginning of the spread of the gospel to the remotest ends of the earth. From this historical notation, it can be deduced that some significant spiritual maturity had been achieved within a three-year period in each of the three areas of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.
3. In Galatians 1:15-18, the Apostle Paul states that he spent three years in Arabia and Damascus after his conversion before meeting with Peter in Jerusalem.
4. In Acts 20:28; the Apostle Paul reminds the elders of the church at Ephesus that he spent three years teaching them.

What is the history of discipleship in the Church?

In the years immediately following the resurrection of Jesus, discipleship was the **primary** focus of the church. The gospel was preached, people repented and were baptized, and those who had been taught the Lord's commands instructed others in the way of righteousness. Small groups of people were trained in homes and were then sent out to make more disciples.

These small groups of people were autonomous. They were linked to other groups through their common faith. The leadership of a group was invested in its elders. These were usually men who were at least thirty years of age and lived by Biblical standards of holy living. Sometime later these elders became known as pastors – those who watched over and cared for the flock.

During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, when the number of groups multiplied in a specific area one elder would be chosen to coordinate activities between the groups. He was given the title of bishop and also served as a representative and spokesman for that area's groups. Discipleship methods changed little during this period of time even in the midst of extreme persecution.

However, in the beginning of the 4th century the Church began to bind itself to secular world power, thinking that this was the way the kingdom of God would be established in the earth. The focus of the Church began to **shift** from making disciples to developing an orthodox belief system. What a person believed overshadowed the One in whom he believed. Christianity became the official religion of the empire and individuals were forced to convert. Church buildings began to be constructed. The New Testament portion of Scripture was developed from various writings and then combined with the Old Testament. These writings became our Bible.

The struggle for political authority and **orthodoxy** (correct belief) continued to increase in scope. Bishops decided the issues of orthodoxy after much dispute among themselves. The bishops from the five major centers of Christianity (Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) were viewed as having greater authority than other bishops because of their great number of followers. These powerful men coerced other bishops to join them in voting on issues

of orthodoxy. The wrangling continued until there were only two main bishops who had their own followings. These two were the Bishop of Rome (who had political ties to the western portion of the Roman Empire) and the Bishop of Constantinople (who had political ties to the eastern portion of the Roman Empire). The infighting between these two groups lasted until 1054 AD when the Church suffered its first split into Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches.

In order to maintain orthodoxy and control of people's beliefs, the Church trained men to lead the individual churches. Eventually this group of educated men would become an elite class. They were known as the clergy. Latin and Greek had become the languages of the Bible and could only be understood by a properly trained member of the **clergy**. With the rise of the professional clergy, ordinary men and women in the Church no longer made disciples on their own. That job was left to the trained staff. Christians tended to be adherents to an orthodox system of beliefs rather than ardent followers of Jesus Christ.

The simple group gatherings of the early Church involving fellowship, communion, prayer and the apostles' teachings on the commands of Jesus gave way to elaborate ritual. The celebration of the Eucharist, also known as the Mass, became the focal point of these gatherings. During the "Middle Ages" the Church plunged into moral decay and its leadership became corrupt. Despite this turn of events, hope was on the horizon.

In the latter part of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century three major events occurred that would shape the Church's future. In 1454, John Guttenberg used the first movable-type printing press in Europe to print the Bible. This eventually led to widespread ownership of Bibles by individuals, printed in their own languages. In 1492, Columbus' discovery of America became a safe haven of migration for those who sought freedom from religious persecution. And in 1517, a German Catholic priest named Martin Luther ignited the fire of reformation that spread throughout all of Christendom.

Because of the reformation Christians began protesting many Church practices, wanting to return to a purer faith. These protesters were divided into two camps: those who remained in the Catholic Church and those who left. Those who remained tried to reform the Church from within but were killed or silenced. The other camp felt it was impossible to reconcile with the "Roman Catholic Church" and separated from it. The latter group has become known as **Protestants**.

Reformation took time. The transformation from man made tradition and ritual, back to the Bible and a simple faith in Jesus Christ, began to evolve slowly. However, orthodoxy still remained the focus of these new Protestant Churches, so much so that we now have hundreds of denominations and thousands of independent churches. "What a person believes" is still in ascendancy over "the One in whom a person believes." Most of the Reformers believed it was necessary to exert control over the people in order to maintain orthodox belief, considering the laity to be ignorant. Therefore, the professional clergy remained and with it the expectation that they would do the work of ministry.

Today, it appears that many within the Church are attempting to return to the fundamental roots of Christianity. People want to know Jesus! And discipleship has become the buzzword in many congregations. There is a hunger in Christians for fellowship with one another and a desire to serve their Lord. They want to be a holy people clothed with power from on high. They want to be Jesus' disciples. And they want to participate in the transformation of the lives of others.

There is hope, but Christians must act. We need to be involved in small groups, loving one another and working together to effect transformation in the lives of people. We should celebrate the Lord's Supper when we meet. Prayers need to be offered up to God as a sweet smelling aroma. And Christians must learn the things that Jesus commanded them to do, and then do them.

What are the purposes of this book series?

1. To answer commonly asked questions about becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. To establish the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church.
3. To give insights into the disciple making process.
4. Provide a teaching outline for everything Jesus asked His disciples to do.

How is the disciple making process accomplished?

1. The disciple making process is divided into fifty-eight teaching lessons.
2. In each lesson, one or more of the action commands that Jesus gave His disciples, will be featured. There are a total of 263 individual commands.
3. A short teaching will provide insight into understanding the command.
4. Group discussion questions are used for reflection on the lesson.
5. An activity is suggested to implement what has been learned in the lesson.

Learn what Jesus teaches us to do, what it means and how it is applied to our lives today as we walk by the Spirit!

Fishers of Men . . . introduces Christians to the subject of becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and covers the first 17 lessons He taught His disciples. Beginning with His command to “Follow Me,” Jesus lays a solid foundation of instructions for developing the character of Christ within individuals.

- *Jesus’ teachings have completely transformed my life. (M.M.)*
- *Jesus invites you to walk with Him and learn from Him. (J.G.)*
- *I have been going to church for over 30 years and have never heard anything like this before. Why don’t churches teach this? (J.R.)*

Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ at age 33, Michael Gibson earnestly wanted someone to disciple him in the faith. Finding no one . . . he became a student, and then teacher of God’s word.

One statement in particular captured his attention, “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) From that he wrote his first book, “Follow Me” (1996), a compilation of the four gospels into one account while highlighting each of the 263 instructions Jesus commanded His disciples to do and teach. Subsequently, he has written the three-part teaching series, “A Journey with Jesus” and many other books which help equip believers to do the work of the ministry.

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