

Discipleship Training Plan Summary – Relationship With God and With Others

What is Discipleship?

We all have a race to run, both individually and collectively, for Jesus. As with any type of training plan, discipleship takes patience, consistency, and perseverance to show up and practice seeking the Lord each day. Along with practice, a good training plan includes time for rest. Our goal is to be disciples known by love (John 13:35), who are consistently practicing the spiritual disciplines found in Scripture and resting in the transformative work the Lord is doing within us. This lesson looks at spiritual training (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 4:7-8), fixing our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2,11), and counting the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33).

Love is Foundational

God's love is the foundation of our faith. Without it, our faith would be like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3). This lesson looks at the depths of God being love, and how that applies to us. God is the source of love (1 John 4:15-16). He demonstrates His love for us through Jesus (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus embodies love through the life He lived and shows us love in His death on the Cross. The Holy Spirit pours this love into *our* hearts (Romans 5:5) so we can love well.

Circumcision of the Heart

Hardened hearts that can be full of shame and guilt, and fear, anxiety, and worry, are the byproduct of sin and life without God (Jeremiah 18:12). Because we live in a broken world, the choices we make to sin and go our own way, or even others' choices to sin against us, have an impact on our hearts. As the hurt and pain accumulate, we build up walls around our hearts to protect ourselves. This lesson looks at how God breaks down these walls and changes our hearts (Ezekiel 11:19-21). Scripture refers to this as the circumcision of the heart. As we walk in new life with Christ, God gives us a new heart, and that new heart is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Titus 3:4-6).

Receive God's Love

Jesus stands knocking at the door of our hearts. If we open that door, He will come in (Revelation 3:20). Jesus may not change our circumstances, but He *will* transform us. If we would only receive Him as children, for the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children (Mark 10:14-15). This lesson reminds us to be dependent upon our Heavenly Father and receive the love He gives us. God wants us to fully trust and depend on Him.

God's Grace, Mercy, and Forgiveness

This lesson is about the Lord's grace, mercy, and forgiveness toward us. God shows us mercy through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus paid the price of our sin debt that we could never pay on our own. God forgives our sin, giving us eternal life with Him, when we turn to Him and walk in grace and truth as His children and co-heirs with Christ. The Bible declares grace is in us and upon us (Acts 4:33; Ephesians 4:7), is our source of strength (Hebrews 13:9), is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:8-9), and is something we are to be growing in (2 Corinthians 8:7,9). By grace, God gives us gifts we are to steward well (2 Timothy 1:8-14).

Reconciliation With God Through Repentance

In Christ, we no longer live under the requirements of the law. Rather, we live in the freedom of God's grace (Romans 6:14). Even though we're saved by grace and desire to follow God's way, we sometimes miss the mark. Like Paul, we do the things we don't want to do when the sin that lives inside us has control (Romans 7:14-25). That said, Jesus corrects and disciplines those He loves (Revelation 3:19), and He calls us to repent of our sin. He reminds us that as His followers it isn't our whole body that needs to be washed, it's just our feet (John 13:10). When we allow sin to live inside of us by not repenting, it gains control over us. We can't walk in the freedom Christ has for us if we are slaves to sin. This lesson shows how exposing the lies in our minds to the light, and confessing our sin by the blood of Jesus, removes sin from our lives and allows us to walk in freedom.

Baptism

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward change. This lesson reinforces that through baptism we make an appeal to God for a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21) in a corrupt world. A person with a good conscience walks with integrity and understands that what God says is good. We love from the place of a pure heart and good conscience (1 Timothy 1:9).

Love God Above All Else

We often get our priorities mixed up and put tasks, things, and other people above God. The Lord tested Abraham's heart, and priorities, by asking him to sacrifice his only son. Abraham passed the test and proved that he loved God with everything he had, even when it didn't make sense (Genesis 17:15-21, 22:1-18). This lesson looks at the things we tend to prioritize over God, and how we can practically love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30) and not love the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17).

Trusting God

Trust is the foundation for healthy relationships, whether it's with God or with others. Our trust in God is demonstrated by our actions, or our works. When we trust God, we obey Him. When we don't trust God, we rebel against what He says. Our choices determine if we live as a watered tree or wither in the scorching heat (Jeremiah 17:7-8). We are to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not depend on our own understanding, seeking His will in which path to take with our lives (Proverbs 3:5-6). This lesson is about letting our faith be genuine in times of trial while trusting in God and His promises.

Resting in the Lord

We live busy, noisy, distracted lives. We seek this and that, hoping to find meaning, fulfillment, and validation. We tire ourselves out trying to attain what the world says we need to be happy. All the while, God calls us to be still and know that He is God (Psalms 46:10). This lesson unveils how we are to follow Christ's example of obedience and love toward the Father through honoring the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8). As Christians, we honor the Sabbath by ceasing work and sitting in His presence.

Discernment (identification of deceptions and lies)

Distinguishing between truth and error is a gift given to us from the Lord. We often confuse discernment with worldly judgment. Discernment helps us avoid straying and keeps us on the straight and narrow path that leads to Jesus. Sometimes, bad fruit looks like good fruit (2 Corinthians 11:14). We can't identify falsehood unless we know what is true. This lesson looks at how we know truth: God, His Word, Jesus' actions and speech, and the Spirit of Truth helping us to understand spiritual things (John 8:31-47, 14:6,16). To apply discernment, we first look at truth according to God's Word. Then we look at what kind of fruit it bears (John 15:1-17; Matthew 7:15-20; Ephesians 5:10-13; 2 Peter 2:3; Jude 1:16; Galatians 5:19-20).

Discernment (identification of false prophets, teachings, and religion)

This lesson adds three additional considerations for discernment: does it claim Jesus (1 John 4:2,6), does it claim the Jesus, gospel, and Holy Spirit of the Bible (2 Corinthians 11:3-4), and does the teacher exhibit the character qualities of Jesus (Jude 11-13,19)? This lesson goes through the false teachings outlined in Scripture (2 Peter 1:19-2:19; 2 Timothy 4:3) and then creates space to identify examples in today's culture.

Humility

Jesus is the best example of humility we have (Philippians 2:1-11). This lesson talks about what humility is, how it agrees with God on who He says He is and who He says we are, and how we are to guard against false humility and doing things for the applause of others (Colossians 2:18-23). In His infinite wisdom, God allowed the thorn in Paul's side to build Paul's character and prevent pride (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Like Paul, we should boast in our weakness so God can show His strength through us.

Love Involves Sacrifice

Selfishness prevents us from loving God and others well. It prevents us from sacrificing of ourselves the way God commands us to. There should be balance, however. It's important to operate out of a full cup. All throughout the Gospels, we see examples of Jesus taking time alone with the Father. He did what was needed to stay connected to the vine so He could serve those He encountered. This lesson talks about how love involves sacrifice. God went first and showed us what this means through Jesus dying on the cross for our sins (John 3:16-17). This was and is the greatest expression of love we will ever know, and we are to give this love away to others (1 John 3:16; Hebrews 13:15-16).

Identity as a Child of God

When we know who we are in Christ we know where we're going, and that informs our decision making. Our identity shifts from being defined by our actions to our position in Christ within the Kingdom of God. This lesson helps us determine to be disciples of Jesus known by our love (John 13:35). Genuine love is the mark of a true Christian and the evidence that we've been born of God and know Him. Hate and love can't flow from the same person (1 John 4:7-8). We are grafted into God's family tree and are now sons of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:12-18).

Obedience

The health and posture of our hearts has an impact on our obedience to God's way. This lesson reveals that it's from a heart postured toward the Lord, and in right relationship with Him, that we *get* to be obedient to Him with our thoughts, words, and actions. Loving God means obeying His commands, and His commands aren't burdensome (1 John 5:3). We demonstrate our faith through obedience (James 1:22-27, 2:14-16). When we are obedient and do His works, He gives the provision to do so (John 14). To obey and love, we must stay connected to God, the source of love (John 15:1-11).

Hearing God's Voice and Being Spirit-led

Relationships are reciprocal and an investment by both parties. The same goes for our relationship with God. We should listen to Him more than we talk at Him. The phrase "whoever has ears, let them hear" shows up many times in Scripture. James tells us to be quick to listen. We learn from Elijah that hearing God's whisper requires us to be in a close, intimate relationship with Him. This lesson looks at how we are to hear God's voice and be led by the Holy Spirit. We either listen to the world or to God (1 John 4:5-6), so this lesson also walks us through how to discern the voice of God from that of the enemy.

Compassion

The heart of our Heavenly Father is compassionate (Psalm 103:8-14), and Jesus demonstrates for us what compassion looks like (Mark 6:30-44). With hearts full of love, we should be moved to action when others, who are made in God's image, are poor or oppressed. This lesson outlines how we ourselves are poor and oppressed apart from God's compassion toward us (Colossians 3:12-14), and how we are called to show our compassion to our neighbors, or like the Good Samaritan, whoever God puts before us that day. This is how we love well.

Serving Others Well

Compassion prompts us to action, and that action is to serve others. Jesus says, "whoever believes in me will do the works that I do; and greater works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). We use the freedom Christ gives us to promote the Great Commandment and serve God and others. We give away what we've been given, washing the feet of others. This lesson shows the key to serving others well is that we can't love and serve in our own strength and power, we need the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:13; 1 John 4:11,19).

Listening to the Heart

The Bible tells us the words we speak are from our hearts (Luke 6:45). So then listening gives us a glimpse into the hearts of others. This lesson teaches that when we listen, we learn what is important to others, and can therefore love each other even better. We are to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters (1 John 3:16), and sometimes that requires us to sacrifice our time, treasures, or talents for the sake of what we hear coming from their hearts.

Stewardship

All we have is from God. We are entrusted to steward it well. Good stewardship takes hard work (Matthew 25:14-30). God calls us to plant and water as He gives the growth. He multiplies our work in His Kingdom for His glory (Matthew 13:3-9). This lesson is about stewarding well God's grace, mercy, trust, love, truth, time, treasures, talents, His Word, our words, and even people. God loves it when we take care of that which He entrusts to us and give His blessings away cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

Speak Truth in Love

Life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). Are we using that power to build our brothers and sisters up in love? The tongue can be a world of unrighteousness (James 3:6), cursing people who are made in the likeness of God (James 3:9). Yet, as mature Christians we are to be different from the world, putting away falsehood, empowered by the Holy Spirit, speaking God's truth with gentleness out of love for others (Ephesians 4:1-16,25,29). This lesson speaks to the power of our words, how they can be used for good or evil, and points to how they should be used for the benefit of God and others. We can love well with our words if we are intentional about speaking God's truth and doing it in a loving way.

Purpose in Your Pain

The Bible looks at pain that comes from three different places: a consequence of our disobedience and living in a broken world (Genesis 3), a testing of our faith to build our character (James 1:2-4), and suffering and persecution because of following Jesus (John 15:18-27). Regardless of the type, the purpose of the pain is to point us back to Jesus. "We can rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hopes does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:3). Growth involves pain and pain is a good teacher. This lesson looks at finding purpose, meaning, and fulfillment in the pain God allows in our lives.

Spiritual Gifts to Build Up the Body of Christ

Spiritual gifts are given to God's people by the Holy Spirit to be used for the common good (1 Corinthians 12). They are to prepare God's people for service and for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). God provides for the things He calls us to do. This lesson looks at spiritual gifts and how they are practically lived out in our everyday lives.

Boundaries Are Loving

Boundaries are used to keep in the good and keep out the bad. This often gets confused, and we hold in our pain and shut out that which is good and healing. Scripture tells us to guard our hearts above all else (Proverbs 4:23), and sometimes this means saying no to others' sinful treatment of us (Matthew 18:15-20). This lesson dives into the topic of healthy, Godly boundaries. We are to take personal responsibility for ourselves, our actions, our thoughts, and our feelings because sin crouches at our door (Genesis 4:6). Boundary conflicts occur when we confuse our role with God's role. We have to trust that God is working in others and stay within our boundaries. We must learn to nourish healthy boundaries.

Be Loved Well

Jesus' command to love others (Mark 12:28-31) implies something that we often overlook. If we are loving well, as we're called to do, then there must be someone on the receiving end of that love. Sometimes, the receiver of love is us! While loving others can be difficult at times, in many respects, receiving love from others is even harder. This lesson is about our need to allow others to use their gifts with God to love us well. God abides in us when we love others, and He abides in them when they love us. This is how God's love is made perfect and complete. When we experience love through others, we are experiencing God because God is love.

Spiritual Warfare

We are called by an Almighty God to promote the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission. Since this is our mission, it makes sense that these are the two big areas the enemy wants to attack. Satan wants to attack our community. He wants to divide us and isolate us from the very community we were made for. This lesson looks at the scheming of the enemy within the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-14) and how it relates to our lives today. It then looks at the practical application of the Armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-20) and obedience to God's way and abiding in Him.

The Great Commission and The Power of Testimony

As Christians, we can triumph over the enemy by the blood of Christ and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). This lesson examines what the Bible says a testimony is (John 3). It studies the power and ripple effect of the woman at the well's testimony after encountering Jesus (John 4). It's important that we reflect on what God has done in our lives and learn how to share our own testimonies. The power of our testimonies is one of the greatest tools God has given us to promote the Great Commandment, fulfill the Great Commission, and invite others to come and see for themselves that the Lord is good.