

# What is Discipleship?

Living the Message: Sharing Good News & Growth  
LifeSpring Seminar Series  
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# Presentation Outline

- Discipleship in Scripture
- Discipleship Definitions
- Key Issues in Discipleship
- A Proposed Definition
- The Challenge of Discipleship

# Discipleship in scripture

- Disciple and related terms (disciple-making, learner) are derived from the Greek *mathetes*.
- “Disciple” = Used in the Gospels (x230) and Acts (x28) to designate those who followed Jesus Christ.
- “Disciple-making” = Used in Matthew 28:19
  - Deliverance- evangelism/baptism
  - Development- spiritual formation
  - Deployment- reproduction

This slide taken from Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*.

# Discipleship in scripture

- Learner = verbal form of *mathetes*, used 13 times in Paul's letters
- Spiritual Formation
  - Galatians 4:19- *morphe* = to shape
  - Romans 8:29, 12:2
- Discipleship = a derivative of biblical terms.

This slide taken from Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*.

## Defining Discipleship

*“Discipleship means adherence to Christ...Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

## Defining Discipleship

*“Discipleship is the relationship I stand into Jesus Christ in order that I might take on his character. As his disciple, I am learning from him how to live my life in the Kingdom as he would if he were I. The natural outcome is that my behavior is transformed. Increasingly, I routinely and easily do the things he said and did.”*

Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation Forum”

# Defining Discipleship

*“A disciple, then, is a reborn follower of Jesus...At the moment of salvation, when someone decides to follow Christ, he shouldn’t experience any interruption in his journey from that point forward. As a new Christian, an individual doesn’t take a ‘second step’ toward becoming a disciple. Instead he embarks on a seamless journey of growth that passes through spiritual childhood, adolescence, and adulthood to maturity...so discipleship means the state of being a disciple.”*

Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*

## Defining Discipleship

*“To respond in conscious faith to an encounter with the reign of God is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Disciples seek to live obediently to God’s will, participating in God’s mission according to the best of their abilities and appropriately for their contexts.”*

Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God & Neighbor*

## 5 Key Issues in Discipleship

1. Discipleship is to Jesus, not anyone else.
2. All Christians are disciples of Jesus Christ, the terms are synonymous.
3. Discipleship is at once both individual and corporate.
4. Discipleship involves both the “inner” and “outer” world of the disciple.
5. Not all disciples of Jesus Christ are actively participating in discipleship.

## A Proposed Definition

*“Discipleship is the ongoing, intentional participation—of the believer individually and the Church corporately—in the process of being transformed into the image of Christ. It is the perpetual response of faith to the sanctifying and empowering grace of God.”*

Israel Steinmetz

# The Challenge of Discipleship

- God's grace is a many-splendored thing. We accept God's grace by faith in its entirety. To accept God's grace to save is to accept His grace to sanctify and empower. To not participate in a process of sanctification and service is to lose faith in the grace of God.
- Christian discipleship is a *decision* for the Christian disciple, but not an *option*. To abstain from discipleship is to forfeit the name disciple.