



11

True Discipleship

Key Theme

- God demands obedience and trust.

Key Passages

- Matthew 10:16–39, 16:24–26; Luke 14:25–33

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe what Jesus requires of His followers.
- Distinguish between making disciples and discipleship.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, “What is the cost of being a disciple of Jesus?”
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God's Word

Jesus taught His disciples what was expected of them, if they were to follow Him. Following Jesus means a life of self-denial and sacrifice. True disciples of Jesus are men and women who are willing to put Him first—above all the things and people of this world.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Growing in Holiness

Students will examine passages that teach of the cooperation between the Holy Spirit and Christians as they seek to grow in holiness becoming conformed into the image of Christ.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

As we study the life of Jesus in the New Testament, we see that He was the one the prophets spoke of; His birth affirmed His humility and His eternal Kingship; He was tempted as man yet without sin; His miracles revealed His power over nature, disease, death, and more. His teachings were unlike any before Him. And we know that in His short three-year ministry, many followed Him.

But as Jesus taught, it became clear that what He asked of His followers—His disciples—was costly. And because of His demands, many turned away from Him.

What was it He demanded? What does He expect of those who would be His true disciples? Many proclaiming Christians do not know what Jesus demands, or perhaps they don't want to consider what He has told us in His Word.

First, let's consider the first and the greatest commandment according to Jesus—to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37–38). Love the Lord your God completely. That is the simple answer to this question about true discipleship. What does this love look like?

Jesus went on to tell us more explicitly what He wanted from His true disciples.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24–26).

Jesus asks much of His followers—more than just learning about Him. He wants us to deny ourselves, to lose our lives, and to forsake the things of the world. This is a call for submission and obedience to His Word (John 14:23). This is a call to put Jesus above the people in our lives that are dearest to us—father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters—and to love the Lord Jesus Christ so much that we would be willing to give up our very lives for Him (Luke 14:26).

Jesus said, “whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). The biblical principle in this is not to get rid of all that you own but to live your life as evidence that you love God more than money. Jesus warned that it's impossible to have two masters, so we can't serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24). The heart of a true disciple is guarded

against the love of money, and consequently, the things money can buy. The Bible tells us that love for things and money becomes the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus's disciples endeavor to live their lives so that nothing would distract from their love, obedience, and submission to their Savior and God.

In all of this, Jesus Christ is calling His disciples to take up their crosses daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Jesus requires that we put aside our own selfish desires and ambitions and that we mimic Christ in His obedience to God (Philippians 2:4–8). For His sake, we must be willing to forsake the world and all it offers (1 John 2:15–17).

In summary, if we are to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, we must live our lives with the intention and the longing to put Jesus Christ above everything and everyone else in our lives. Our strongest desire should be to please Him—the one who died and rose again for sinners. As disciples, we should long for His fellowship and seek to know Him better each day.

The Scriptures tell us to examine and test ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). Does your life reflect the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Does your walk back up your talk (Titus 1:16)? Would you be willing to give up all He has given you—even to the point of death—for His sake?

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Jesus made some pretty demanding requirements for those who want to follow Him:

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. . . . whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:26–33).

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:23–26).

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 10:37–39).

Is it any wonder that, “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66)? As we consider these strong words, how are we to respond to them? Can we “measure up” to Jesus’s demands? How can anyone possibly qualify as His disciple? The answer to these questions is found in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must realize that the gospel is not only the entry point into the Christian life but also the foundation and source for all we do as disciples of Jesus. The gospel—the good news of what God has graciously done in the birth, life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ to secure forgiveness of sins and perfect righteousness for all who trust in Him—should inform, control, and empower all we do.

“Do-it-yourself,” “pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps” spirituality has no place in Christianity! Of course, the way some of us approach our own spiritual growth as disciples might suggest otherwise. We sometimes think that sanctification is really all about what we do, how we live, and how disciplined we are. We grit our teeth and try harder. While it is true that we have an active role to play in our sanctification, that does not mean relying on the flesh but walking in the Spirit—the Holy Spirit who indwells and strengthens us to do God’s will (Galatians 5).

Jesus does not make demands of His own without giving the ability to fulfill those commands. The Apostle Paul wrote: “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). These words assure us as Christians that what God started in us, He will finish. While some teach that we can achieve perfection in this life and be completely free from the presence of sin, Scripture is clear that it will not be completed, or matured, until the Lord Jesus returns. As an example, even at the end of his life, the Apostle Paul called himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). While Christians should experience ever-increasing victory over sin as they mature, it is not until we are glorified at the resurrection that we will be perfectly conformed into the image of Jesus.

God’s purpose or goal for each of His disciples is Christlikeness. Paul explains God’s plan: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). One way that

God conforms believers into the image of Christ is through the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. When we were saved, we were indwelt by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:13). The indwelling Spirit of God gives us the inner spiritual resources to overcome sin. He gives us the desires and abilities to resist temptation and overcome it.

The Scriptures often speak of our responsibility to obey Jesus, to pursue holiness, to strive for perfection, and yet with surprising regularity they also speak of the Spirit’s role in accomplishing our sanctification. It is the Spirit who sanctifies. For example, Philippians 2:12–13 tells us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” and yet it tells us that ultimately it is “God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” We work and strive, but ultimately it is not our working that brings about our spiritual growth.

The Apostle Paul spells out for believers time and again that they are transformed, sanctified, and made to increase in holiness because of what God does (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

This doctrine creates some tension to be sure. The demands of Jesus Christ on His disciples are strenuous as stated above. But those of us who accept the grace of the gospel realize that these demands provoke us to lean into God, His gospel, and the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish what He asks. The truth is, because of the influence of indwelling sin, we will continually have to fight the flesh (Romans 7:17–20). And as we meditate on these difficult truths, we understand the Apostle Paul’s proclamation in Romans 7:24–25 where he clearly shows the battle we are in, but it is a battle that must always end with the gospel message. “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

It is Christ and the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit that will ultimately grant us freedom from sin, to His praise and glory!



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, help us all to realize that following Jesus is not all about being happy, living the dream, being part of a special club, or having a better life now. Living a life submitted to Jesus Christ involves suffering and sacrifice for the sake of Christ. I pray for my students that they will follow you and will come to know more and more that this is not their home but that an eternal prize awaits the children of God that will make this world pale in comparison.

Review

We have spent a lot of time in our recent lessons focusing on who Jesus is and what He did while He was here on the earth. I think our lesson last week on the deity of Jesus and His self-identification as God is a very important point for us to keep in mind. This is not only for our own edification, but also helpful as we seek to share the truth of Jesus with unbelievers.

? Who would like to share a way that last week's lesson on the names Jesus attributed to Himself has been a blessing in the past week? *Discuss various answers.*

Disciple: Someone who submits to the teaching and will of a leader, modeling their lives after them

Today we are going to look at what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus. In order to have a fruitful time of teaching today, we need to make sure we have one point very clear. We need to draw a distinction between making disciples and the process of discipleship. In short, it is not possible to be discipled without first becoming a disciple. In a Christian context, someone must submit to Jesus as King before they can be called a disciple.

This idea is presented in the passage we know as the Great Commission. Turn to Matthew 28:18–20. *Read the passage aloud.* Notice in this passage that there are two “steps” identified by Jesus. The first step is the conversion of people to become disciples of Christ and their baptism in the name of the Trinity. The second step is teaching the disciples to obey all of the teachings of Jesus. The process of discipleship follows after a disciple submits to Christ as Lord and Savior.

Discipleship: The process of teaching by which a Christian grows to be more like Christ.

So, evangelism has as its goal the making of new disciples, and that is followed by discipleship, where those disciples grow in maturity in the faith in a local church body. As we work through our lesson today, we want to keep those distinctions in mind, and we will draw out some of the details of those distinctions as we work through our passages for the day.



► Write on the board, “What is the cost of being a disciple of Jesus?”



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

In our first section, we are going to examine a text that relates to being a disciple of Jesus. This account falls near the middle of Jesus's earthly ministry near the end of AD 32. *Refer to the New Testament History Timeline under “Sending Out the Twelve.” A shorter description is given in Luke 9.* **Let's read Matthew 10:16–39** and think about what the disciples were called to. Looking in verse 5, we see that Jesus is talking directly to the Twelve Apostles and is

sending them out on their first outing to proclaim the good news. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What general experience did Jesus warn the twelve to be prepared for as He sent them out to preach?** *He was sending them out into a dangerous situation (as sheep among wolves) where they could face many trials.*
- ? **What specific dangers did Jesus warn them of?** *He warned them that they would face trials by various government leaders, including scourging.*
- ? **What was the reason the disciples would be brought before these leaders?** *For the sake of Jesus's name; they would be there to bear testimony to the truths of the kingdom they were proclaiming.*
- ? **Who were the disciples to rely on to answer appropriately before these leaders?** *They were not to be anxious about their responses but to rely on the Holy Spirit to speak through them. This should not be misunderstood as a command not to study or prepare to claim the truth but to be confident in the Spirit to proclaim what truth they already knew.*
- ? **What type of strife is described for disciples of Jesus in verses 21–23?** *There will be strife within families, even to the point of parents turning their children over to be killed. Further, those claiming the name of Jesus will be hated by all.*
- ? **How does a disciple compare to his teacher?** *Jesus reminds them that a disciple must see the teacher (master) as having the authority in the relationship.*
- ? **Why does Jesus point to this comparison?** *It seems that He is trying to help them see that if the teacher, Jesus, is facing persecution, there is no reason to think that His disciples will not.*
- ? **What was Jesus's intention in referencing Beelzebub?** *Beelzebub was a Canaanite deity who had become synonymous with Satan. In Matthew 9:34, the Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out a demon by the power of the ruler of the demons. Later, in Matthew 12:24, the same claim was made using the name Beelzebub. If those persecuting Jesus had called Him Beelzebub, how much more scorn would the disciples face?*
- ? **Verse 27 uses some figurative language. What is the point of this verse?** *Jesus is telling them to boldly proclaim those things they have been learning in the private instruction they had been receiving.*
- ? **Who did Jesus tell the disciples to fear?** *Rather than fearing men who can only harm or kill the body, they should fear God who has the power to condemn men and cast both body and soul into hell.*
- ? **How did Jesus encourage them after telling them not to fear being killed by men?** *He reminded them that they are loved by God. And if God cares for the small and insignificant sparrows, how much more will He care for those made in His image and called to be His children who do His work.*
- ? **What did Jesus promise to do for those who confess Him before men?** *He would claim them as His own before the Father in the judgment.*

- ? **What is the fate of those who deny knowing Jesus in front of men?** *Likewise, Jesus will deny them as His own before the Father in the judgment.*
- ? **Beginning in verse 34, how did Jesus describe the effect of His ministry on earth?** *He did not come to bring peace between people, but a sword. He referred back to several Old Testament passages that talked of this as a sign of judgment on those who rejected God.*
- ? **What did Jesus mean by bringing a “sword”?** *The following context makes it clear that the sword signifies division within families as a result of some accepting the message of the gospel while others do not.*
- ? **What did Jesus tell the disciples about their love for Him with respect to others?** *They were to love Jesus more than any family members, or they were not worthy to be followers.*
- ? **What did Jesus tell them to pick up as they followed Him?** *He told them to pick up their crosses and follow Him.*
- ? **What would this imagery mean to a person of that day?** *To tell someone to take up a cross was to call them to take up the very instrument that would bring them death. This was a clear call to be willing to lay down their life for the sake of Jesus.*
- ? **How did Jesus describe the exchange one would need to make to be His disciple?** *Those who wish to give up their own lives to pursue the life of following Jesus would find their true purpose in life and in the life to come. Those who cling to their own lives will lose their lives in the eternal sense.*
- Matthew 16:24–26**
- ? **This call to take up a cross was repeated throughout Christ’s ministry. What additional truth did He add to this call in Matthew 16:24–26?** *Have someone read the passage.*
- ? **How would you summarize the call given to these disciples?** *Discuss various answers, focusing on the absolute devotion to Christ and following Him at all costs.*
- 1 Corinthians 11:1**
- ? **Is the call for us as disciples any different?** *There is no reason to think that these same ideas would not apply to each of us as disciples of Jesus today. In fact, the Apostle Paul lived this type of life and called those in the Corinthian church to imitate his life, just as he was imitating Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1).*

Discover the Truth

The men Jesus is instructing in this passage are those who had already submitted to Jesus as His disciples. He had called them, and they had followed. They were learning and growing as they heard His teaching and watched Him interact with various people. Now it was their turn to

begin proclaiming the message. They were being sent out into a hostile environment and told to call people to repent of their sin and trust in Jesus as the Messiah.

The phrases Jesus used in this passage seem very radical to us. We do not typically hear about being willing to offend people for the sake of the gospel. We don't typically talk about how one person's life being transformed by the gospel could bring strife within a family, setting a father against his own son. But this is the reality for many people around the world. When a Muslim man in Iran hears the message of the gospel and submits his life to be a true disciple of Jesus, he may face a death threat from his father or other family members. That is a radical call to pick up a cross and follow Jesus, giving up your own life for the sake of following Jesus.

Do we really wake up each day ready to live in a way that is so different from the rest of the world around us that we could face serious persecution, or even death? Or do we seek our own comfort, avoiding those things that might bring a sword rather than peace?

We should never be offensive to people because of the attitude we portray or the clumsy and careless way that we use our words or carry out actions. But the gospel is offensive. To proclaim the gospel is to tell others that they are sinful (Romans 3:23), that they are enemies of God because of that sin (Colossians 1:21), and that they need to repent of their sins and look to Christ for forgiveness (Acts 20:21). The message and demands of becoming a disciple of Christ are offensive to our Western self-righteous attitudes, and proclaiming that truth in words and deeds will offend almost everyone we proclaim it to. But it is the message we are called to proclaim as disciples, seeking to lay down our lives and interests for the sake of glorifying Christ and pointing others to the forgiveness available through Him.

Let us not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ or of being His disciple. Rather, let us confess His name before men so that He will not deny that we are His before His Father. Although the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, it is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18).





Growing in Holiness

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Jesus told His disciples that if they loved Him, they would keep His commandments and obey His words (John 14:15–24). To be a disciple of Jesus is to submit to Him as Savior and Lord in all aspects of life. As we have talked about in the past, when we turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, our sins are forgiven us, and we are seen as righteous in God’s eyes, not because of our righteousness but based on what Jesus has done for us—taking our sin and obeying in our place.

Teaching on the extent of sanctification is different in various denominations. Take time to understand your church’s position on this topic as you teach the students about progressive sanctification.

Although we have been declared righteous at the moment of our salvation—

justified—we continue to battle against the indwelling sin of our flesh. We are not yet perfect, but Jesus calls us to be perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

The theological term for this is *progressive sanctification*, or growing in holiness. Sanctification is the process of growing in holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit, becoming conformed into the image of Christ.

After our initial justification, we are called as disciples to pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:4). In Romans 8:29, Paul tells us that we are predestined by God to be conformed into the image of Jesus. But how do we grow in holiness to be more like Jesus? Is it our responsibility or God’s? Will we ever be free from sin in this life? What if we sin; do we lose our salvation? Turn to the Growing in Holiness activity in your Student Guide, and work through the passages there to see what God has to say on this topic. *Have the students work in groups to complete the activity.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's talk about what you found in Scripture regarding our growth in holiness. What conclusions about your role and the Spirit's role in sanctification did you draw from each of the following passages?

1. **Romans 8:12–14** *By the power of the Spirit we are to put to death the deeds of the flesh, following the lead of the Spirit.*
2. **Romans 12:1–2** *By the mercies of God, we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices and allow God to renew our minds, being transformed by the work of the Spirit in us.*
3. **Galatians 5:16–26** *We are called to walk in the Spirit so that we do not allow our flesh to rule our thoughts and actions, having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Being led by the Spirit, we can walk in Him, displaying the fruit of the Spirit rather than the works of the flesh/sinful nature.*
4. **Philippians 2:12–13** *We are called to "work out" our own salvation knowing that God the Holy Spirit is working in us to give us the will to grow in holiness. All of this is pleasing to God.*
5. **2 Thessalonians 2:13–15** *We are to stand fast in the teaching of Scripture doing those things it calls us to, knowing that God has called us to salvation that we may obtain the glory of Jesus Christ.*

6. **1 John 1:8–2:6** *We are to acknowledge when we sin, confessing those sins to God, knowing that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. The love of God is perfected in us as we are obedient to His Word and abide in Him.*

? How would you describe the process of growing in holiness (progressive sanctification) in light of your role and the role of the Holy Spirit? *The process of sanctification is one of cooperation with the Holy Spirit, striving to put to death the sins we commit while relying on His power at work in us to do so.*

It is important to remember that the message of the gospel is not just something we need to hear to receive salvation, but it is a message that continues to shape our daily Christian life. As we think about what Jesus has done for us, we should be compelled to pursue obedience to His commands and strive to become holy just as He is Holy. But we cannot do this in our own strength—we must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit living in us to bring this work to completion. It is only in the Spirit's power that we can begin each day by taking up our cross and following after our Lord.



READ THE WORD

Let's look at a passage in Luke 14:25–33 where Jesus taught about the cost of discipleship in the final weeks before His death. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 14:25–33

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Who was Jesus addressing? *He was talking to a large crowd that was following Him.*

- ? **What did Jesus say was the first requirement to be His disciple?** *He told them they must hate their family members and their own lives to be His disciples.*
- ? **Did Jesus really mean they needed to hate their family?** *If He truly meant for them to hate, He would be contradicting other teachings where He calls His disciples to love others. This is an example of hyperbole—exaggerating to make a point. In light of the previous passages we have looked at, we should understand this phrasing to mean that in comparison to our love for Jesus, we should “hate” our family and even our own life to follow Him.*
- ? **What two metaphors did Jesus use to describe the cost of discipleship?** *He compared discipleship to building a tower and fighting a war against a superior foe.*
- ? **How does the tower analogy relate to being a disciple of Jesus?** *If a man is going to build a tower, he should consider whether he has the resources to complete it or he will be mocked for not being able to finish it. Likewise, one should count the cost of being a disciple of Christ and his willingness to die to self and pick up a cross to follow Jesus.*
- ? **How does the war analogy relate to being a disciple of Jesus?** *Just as a king facing a war against a superior enemy should seriously consider whether he should seek terms of peace before losing the battle and his kingdom, so those who are considering following Christ should count the cost, being willing to sacrifice all they have.*
- ? **What must be forsaken to become a disciple of Christ?** *They must forsake all that they have to be a disciple of Jesus.*

Discover the Truth

Jesus was not looking to gain a large following of people who enjoyed listening to His teaching—His goal was to make true disciples who would follow Him and who would make more disciples. He did not coddle the crowds but spoke truth to them in a way that called them to count the cost of following Him before they made fools of themselves by beginning a task they could not complete. Only those the Father was drawing through the work of the Spirit would truly submit to the Son as Lord (John 6). These were willing to pay the high price of discipleship and would be able to do so as the Spirit enabled them. In Jesus was forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life—a reward worthy of losing one’s life here on earth.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the call to be a disciple of Jesus, we can’t forget that there is an aspect of proclaiming the gospel that should bring great joy to the hearers—the penalty for their sin will be removed by Jesus. He is the Savior, not just a good teacher. But in proclaiming that good news of salvation, we must call people to forsake the sin that they love. We must

tell them that to be a disciple of Jesus also means that they will have to die to their own sinful desires and serve Christ alone. But no one can qualify to be a disciple by their own works—they must repent of their sin and trust in Jesus for forgiveness.

But God empowers those who are called as disciples to live a life that is worthy of their calling. That empowering comes through the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells within each disciple of Christ. All of those who are truly born again by the Spirit are given the ability to pursue holiness as they strive to be more like the Savior they are following. In the process of discipleship, mature Christians work to teach newer disciples to obey all that we have received in the Word (the Bible) from the Word made flesh (Jesus). As we trust in the power of God to complete the work He has begun in us, we work to put to death the sins of the flesh and encourage one another to live lives of holiness and obedience to the Lord who bought us with His blood.

Whether in the process of evangelism, calling others to become disciples, or in the teaching of disciples, we are privileged to work alongside the Holy Spirit, cooperating with His work in the hearts of men to grow in holiness. In all of this, we look forward to that day when we will be resurrected to be with Christ and be made perfectly holy and freed from the presence of sin for eternity. In that perfect state we will be able to offer pure worship alongside all those throughout the ages who have heard and responded to the call to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, our Savior. The gospel is truth that brings salvation and truth that empowers us to live a life of holiness each day. Even on our best days we are not beyond the need for God's grace in our lives.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? As you think about your life as a disciple of Jesus, in what areas has it been the hardest for you to die to your own desires and live for Him? *Discuss various answers, reminding the students that we have the Holy Spirit in us to enable us to obey and other Christians around us to spur us on to holiness.*
- ? Is it possible for someone to live like and look like a disciple of Jesus but not be a true disciple, fully submitted to Christ as Savior and Lord? *It is possible for people to make a commitment to follow Jesus without a full understanding of the gospel. They may be able to do some of the things Christians do, but they will eventually fall away or grow weary because they are not relying on the Spirit's power to obey but their own strength. We should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith and encourage others to do the same, trusting that God can bring them to repentance if they are not true disciples.*
- ? How does this idea of counting the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus relate to the parable of the sower that we discussed a few weeks ago? *In the parable of the sower, Jesus talked about those who gladly received the word, but then persecution came and caused them to abandon their commitment because it was made under false pretenses*

(Matthew 13:20–21). Similarly, there are those who hear the word but allow the desires of the world to make them unfruitful (Matthew 13:22) rather than pursuing Christ. In many cases, the gospel is presented as a life enhancement message, and there is no call to repent and to die to self and, as a result, many become false converts, following the Jesus of prosperity rather than the true Jesus. We should strive to teach the true gospel message and the whole counsel of Scripture, praying the seeds fall on good soil.

? In many evangelistic contexts, those being presented with the gospel are never asked to consider the cost of being a disciple of Christ but hear only the benefits of salvation. What role should the cost of discipleship play in evangelism and seeking to call people to be disciples of Jesus? *While our primary emphasis in evangelism should be to call people to recognize their own sinfulness and turn to Christ for forgiveness, we should not mislead people to think the Christian life is one of peace and ease. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), but there is also great joy and fulfillment in living a life pleasing to our Creator.*

? We are commanded to teach others to obey the commands of Jesus. To what authority should we point them to know what Jesus commanded? *We should point them to the truths found in the Bible. It is from the authority of the Bible that we know who Jesus is and what He taught. Rather than traditions and things we have heard, we must look to God's Word for the true teachings as we disciple others.*

? What role do you have in calling disciples (evangelism) and teaching disciples to obey (discipleship)? *Discuss various answers, reminding the students that all Christians are called to share the gospel and make disciples and that we all have the opportunity to teach one another, especially those who are younger in the faith than we are.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His grace working in our lives to grow us in holiness.
- Praise God for His kindness in sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.
- Ask God for wisdom and perseverance in pursuing holiness alongside one another.