



11

True Discipleship

Key Theme

- God demands obedience and trust.

Key Passages

- Matthew 16:24–26, 22:36–37; Luke 14:26

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe what Jesus requires of His followers.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher.



Activity 1: True Discipleship Class Notes

Students will fill out the True Discipleship Class Notes as you study the lesson.



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 people who are willing to put Him first—above all the things and people of this world.



Activity 2: Four in a Row Game

Students will compete in teams to answer review questions and be the first team to get four of their markers in a row.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student
- Pencils



TRUE DISCIPLESHIP CLASS NOTES

- Print one True Discipleship Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- True Discipleship Class Notes for each student
- True Discipleship Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

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

- Student Take Home Sheets



FOUR IN A ROW GAME

- Print one Four in a Row Game Questions from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Prepare a 16-section square grid on the floor with masking tape.
- Cut 8 red and 8 blue circles from red and blue construction paper or use different colored paper plates.

- Four in a Row Game Questions
- Masking tape
- 8 red and 8 blue construction paper circles or different colored paper plates to mark the grid



MEMORY VERSE REVIEW GAME (OPTIONAL)

- Print, preferably onto cardstock, and cut out one copy of the Memory Verse Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Save the cards for use in future lessons.
- This is an optional activity to use in some or all of the lessons to review the memory verse if time allows.

- Memory Verse Cards printed on cardstock
- Tape or poster putty



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."



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the 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 one owns 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 fulfil 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 and living the dream. It’s not about being part of a special club or having a better life now. Living a life submitted to Jesus Christ involves suffering and sacrifice—being willing to give up what we have for the sake of Christ. I pray for my students that they will one day follow you, and they will come to know that this is not their home but that an eternal prize awaits the children of God—a prize that will make all the glamour and glitz of this world pale in comparison.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



True Discipleship Class Notes

MATERIALS

- True Discipleship Class Notes for each student
- True Discipleship Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students match the shapes and fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We will finish them together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will read what the Bible says about disciples—or followers—of Jesus Christ. People who follow Jesus must be willing to put Him first in their lives.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster. God used a name in the Old Testament. Jesus used a name in the New Testament. What is that name? *I AM.*

That's right. God told Moses, "I AM who I AM." And Jesus told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Jesus was telling the Jews that He IS God. And there is no other way to heaven and eternal life with God except through Jesus.

➤ The class notes are designed and written simply. Please encourage and help your students to read them as the class progresses. They are an excellent means to review important lesson principles.

► Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we have written these lessons for you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, please encourage your students to bring Bibles to class. And if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.

Matthew 16:24

► Write the three things on the board as you read. 1) Deny himself. 2) Take up his cross. 3) Follow Jesus.

► Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson. Emphasize that Jesus ministered only 3 years, and He lived only about 35 years. Yet His life changed the world forever and brought eternal life to all who believe.

Matthew 16:25

Refer to Memory Verse Poster. **Hey! That sounds like John 14:6. That is our memory verse. Let's say it together.** *Recite the memory verse together.*

Jesus's life and His Words showed that He was God in the flesh. His miracles showed His power over nature (*Lesson 2 Lesson Theme Poster*), power over disease (*Lesson 3 Lesson Theme Poster*), power over death (*Lesson 4 Lesson Theme Poster*), and more! His teaching was different than anyone else's before Him. Many Jews hated Him because of what He did and said. They wanted to kill Him. And they tried several times. But many people loved Jesus, believed in Him, and followed Him.

It wasn't always easy to follow Jesus. He asked a lot from those who loved Him and wanted to be His disciples, or followers. That is what we are going to read about today.

Let's start today with Matthew 16:24. Being a follower of Jesus means changing your life! Let's read, and you'll see what I mean. *Read Matthew 16:24 emphasizing the answers to the questions below.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? First, who was Jesus talking to in these verses? *His disciples.*
- ? He told His disciples if they wanted to follow Him they had to do three things. What were those three things? Listen again as I read Matthew 16:24. *Re-read Matthew 16:24 emphasizing the answers. Deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.*
- ? So if we want to follow Jesus what must we deny? *Ourselves.*
- ? And what must we take up? *Our cross.*
- ? Does Jesus mean we will all die on a cross? *Allow discussion.*

No. Jesus did not mean that. Jesus died on the Cross. He was obeying His Father. And Jesus wants His followers to be obedient. He wants His followers to be willing to sacrifice for Him because we love Him. That probably won't mean dying on a cross. But it might mean giving things up or putting others before yourself. And that's not easy!

- ? Take a look at your class notes. This is a little different today. Match the shape in each question with the shape in the word bank. Copy the word into the shape on your class notes. Will someone read #1? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Deny. Have students complete #1.*
- ? And what about #2? What is the second thing Matthew 16:24 says we must do to follow Jesus? *Assign a reader. Cross. Have students complete #2.*

OK. But Jesus said more. Listen to the next verse, Matthew 16:25. *Read Matthew 16:25.*

- ? What will happen to someone who wants to save his life? *He will lose it.*
- ? What will happen to someone willing to lose his life? *He will save it.*
- ? This sounds confusing, doesn't it? What do you think Jesus meant here?
Allow discussion.

Let me explain. Jesus was talking about two different kinds of life here. Life on earth is our *physical* life. Life after we die is our *eternal* life. Both are very real. What Jesus was saying is if we live our life on earth focused on ourselves—on our physical life—and in love with the things the world has to offer—if those things are the most important to us—then in the end we will not have *eternal* life with Him. But, if we are willing to deny ourselves—our physical life—give up the things of the world, and make Jesus the most important thing in our life, we will receive *eternal* life and will spend it in heaven with Jesus.

- ? Look back at the class notes. Will someone read #3 for us? How will you complete that? Who should be the most important thing in our life? *Assign a reader. Jesus. Have students complete #3.*

Jesus still wasn't finished. Listen carefully to this. He talks about gaining something in the next verse. *Read Matthew 16:26.*

- ? What is Jesus talking about gaining or getting? *The world.*
- ? Right! If a man gains the whole world, what could he lose? Listen again. *Re-read Matthew 16:26. His own soul.*

Discover the Truth

Being a follower of Jesus is not easy. But it is worth it! Jesus said we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. He asked what we could possibly get if we gained the whole world but lost our soul.

You see, if we lose our soul we will not have *eternal* life! Jesus wants us to love Him more than we love the things in the world! Because the world can't give us true, eternal life. Jesus is the only way, truth, and life. If someone really wants to follow Jesus he has to put Jesus first—before anything in the world.

This is something that takes a lifetime to understand. But as you grow and learn more about Jesus, the gospel, and all He did for you, it will get easier to follow Him.

- ? Will someone read #4 on your class notes? How will you answer that?
Assign a reader. Jesus. Have students complete #4.
- ? And where should Jesus be in our life? How will you answer #5 on your class notes? *Assign a reader. First. Have students complete #5.*



➤ Re-read the verses or the portion of the verse(s) that answer the questions you are asking of the text.

Matthew 16:26

Luke 14:26

READ THE WORD

Being a disciple of Jesus means putting Jesus first before EVERYTHING the world offers us. I want to read one more verse to you. It is Luke 14:26. Jesus is speaking in this verse. He is talking about something else we must be willing to give up. Listen to this. *Read Luke 14:26.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

► Write the seven things Jesus mentions in Luke 14:26 on the board as the students recite them.

- ? Who is speaking here? *Jesus.*
- ? What does Jesus say we must hate? He mentions seven different things. What are they? *Re-read the verse. Count off the seven things or write them on the board. Father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and our own life.*

Discover the Truth

Wow! This does not make sense at first, does it? The Bible says we are to honor our parents and love our neighbors as ourselves, right? Jesus would not go against what He has already told us about these things. So we know He isn't talking about hate the way we might think of hate.

What Jesus IS saying is that we should never love anyone so much that we forget our love for Jesus. No disciple of Jesus should ever let any person stand between him and following God. In other words, our love for Jesus should be greater than our love for anything or anyone else.

- ? With that in mind, will someone read #6 on the class notes? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Love. Have students complete #6.*

God has given us special people in our lives who love us. They are blessings from God. They help us, take care of us, protect us, and encourage us. And that is all good. But Jesus warned that we are not to put anyone in our life above Him. Jesus is Lord and Savior. Only He can give us eternal life. He is God who came to earth so that sinners could be saved. He is worthy of all our praise and should be the most important person in our life.



READ THE WORD

Matthew 22:36-37

Let's read one more passage. This will help us understand all we have been talking about so far. Listen to Matthew 22:36-37. *Read the verses.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who is the teacher here? *Matthew 22:36. Jesus.*
- Yes. The Pharisees were gathered together, and one of them was asking Jesus a question.

- ? **What did he ask?** *Re-read Matthew 22:36. Which is the great commandment?*
- ? **And how did Jesus answer?** *Re-read Matthew 22:37. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*

Discover the Truth

- ? Someone read #7 on your class notes. The verse I just read answered this. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. All, heart, mind. Have students complete #7.*

Jesus said this is the greatest commandment—to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. This is what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus. This is how much we should love Jesus if we want to follow Him. If we love Him this much, the things of the world will not be that important to us. We will gladly deny ourselves and give up things to follow Him. And we will not allow the people in our lives to come between us and God.



➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.



Four in a Row Game

MATERIALS

- Four in a Row Game Questions
- Masking tape
- Red construction paper—8 sheets
- Blue construction paper—8 sheets
- OR Small paper plates in two different colors

INSTRUCTIONS

Using masking tape, put a grid pattern of 4 squares x 4 squares on the floor large enough for a paper plate to fit inside each square. Divide the class into two teams. Give each team different colored circles or paper plates—blue and red.

Ask each team a question. If Blue Team answers correctly, they can place a plate on the grid. If the team cannot answer correctly, allow Red Team to answer. If no one gets the answer, give the correct answer and repeat the question later. Repeat the process above until a team gets four squares in a row. Continue play as time allows. Encourage the students to look at their class notes, the Lesson Theme Poster, and other posters that may help them during the game.

OK. We're going to play a fun game to see how much you remember from today's lesson. I'll ask your team a question. You can work together to come up with the answer. If your answer is correct your team can place a plate on one of the squares on this grid. Whichever team gets four plates in a row first, wins. *Repeat game and questions as time allows.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Good job working together!

The verses we read today really showed what Jesus requires of His followers. He told His disciples that they should be willing to give up everything—possessions, family members, money, even their own life—to follow Him. Since Jesus gave His life so that sinners may have eternal life, His followers should be willing to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord above all.





Memory Verse Review (Optional)

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.”

If you find you have extra time, please consider reviewing the memory verse with your class.

MATERIALS

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Cards printed on cardstock
- Tape or poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Print, preferably onto cardstock, and cut out one copy of the Memory Verse Cards. Tape the cards in order on the wall or board as you recite the verse together. Review the verse as you point to each card. Choose a student to remove one card of his choice. Recite the verse again. You can use these cards for Lessons 7–12.

We’re going to practice our memory verse. Let’s say the verse together as I place these

cards onto the board. *Show each card as you read it, post it on the board, and have the students repeat.*

Good job! But wait! I’m going to ask one of you to come up and take one of the cards down. Then we’ll say the verse without that card! Are you ready? *Continue to choose students to remove cards one at a time, reciting the whole verse between each one.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Good job! Jesus is the only way to the Father. He promises eternal life to those who believe in Him and know Him as their Savior. Jesus is the truth; we can trust everything He says—we can believe Him! Jesus is the life; He is risen from the dead and offers eternal life to sinners who believe in His name.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Following Jesus is not always easy. Jesus said if anyone wants to follow Him he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Him. Jesus wants His followers to love Him above everything else—even above family and all of our things. That's hard because our sinful nature wants all the things of this world. But Jesus wants His followers to seek Him and love and obey Him with their whole heart.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Being a disciple of Jesus seems like it would be very difficult. But the truth is if we really understand what Jesus did for us when He died on the Cross, and we accept His free gift of eternal life, something happens.

The Bible says that we become new creations in Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. And the power of the Holy Spirit can change our hearts and make us new. The Bible says our old hearts that loved the worldly things more than God will be replaced with new hearts that want to love God more than anything the world can offer.

God promises to help believers to love Him this much and obey His Word.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



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

- Praise God for His holy Word.
- Pray that the students will become new creations in Christ and want to live to honor Him more than the world.

