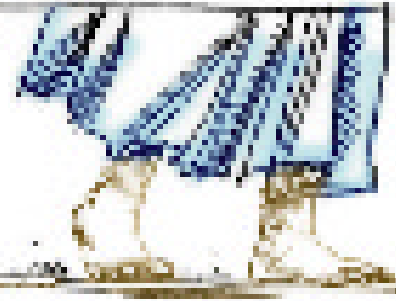


Learning from Jesus “Follow Me.”

...learning to live where the load is light



Lesson 1 / Page 1

Jesus prayed,

“O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way! My Father has given me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”

—Matthew 11:25-30, New Living Translation

- Read the passage above again, slowly. Who does Jesus invite to come to Him? Do you qualify?

Doesn't this invitation just draw you to Jesus? To think that the Father is pleased to reveal deep truth to us, the childlike, amazes me. We don't need to be wise or clever, we just need to be childlike. We're just invited to take Jesus at His word and trust Him.

Do you ever stop and think about the awesome gift of Jesus choosing to reveal His Father to you? He invites us to learn from Him. Jesus Himself wants to teach us. His desire is for us to live unburdened and peaceful lives. How far away from that plan have you drifted? Are you, like me, ready to get back to the basics? Back to the simplicity of the gospel, back to the good news about Christ? Do you long to hear Jesus speak in His gentle and humble way deep into your heart? Is your soul crying out for rest?

Jesus, our rabbi, invites us to be His disciples and to take on His yoke. He gives us purpose for living as He teaches us to make disciples. And He promises us that this plan fits perfectly into our lives because He created us to be His disciples. Whether you are a seasoned follower or a new disciple, this study is designed to equip you and encourage you to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. For some the lessons will be new information that is necessary to build your foundation on as you learn what it means to follow Christ as His disciple. For others, these lessons will remind you of what it means to be a follower and equip you to obey Jesus' command to make disciples.

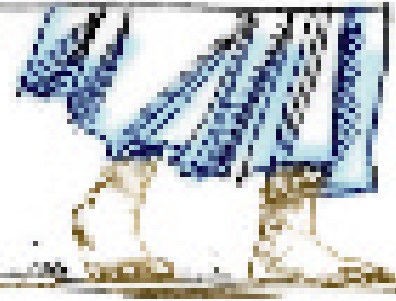
Thank you for joining a small group and participating in this study. Our prayer is that you feel safe and able to share what you are learning and how you are growing. You are among friends. None of us have it all together; not one of us has all the answers. We are all in process, and God loves the journey. Commit yourself to doing your study, to participating in your small group and to praying for one another.

Listen to this mandate from Hebrews 10:23-25: *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

May God bless you as you spend time in His Word!

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Lesson 1 / Page 2

As you begin your lesson you will see that each lesson is divided into three sections. Each section will be explained to you in this first lesson. You may want to allot a few minutes each day to work on your lesson and then review it from beginning to end before attending your small group.

Loving our Lord . . .

In order for us to follow Jesus, we must trust Him. In order to trust Him, we must know His character. During our 'devotion' (Loving our Lord) portion of these lessons, we will focus on different attributes of God's character. This part of the lesson is designed to set our hearts on things above (Colossians 3:1-2) and to focus our minds on Whom it is we are communicating with. Remember the goal of our time in God's Word is not to answer questions, but to build a strong relationship with our Abba, our Father in heaven. Don't rush this time. Still your heart and mind. Be quiet. Invite the Holy Spirit to teach you.

1. Read Matthew 11:27. How will we come to know the Father? _____

2. How does Jesus respond to Philip's request to see the Father in John 14:8-10? _____

3. Begin this study with a thankful heart. Take a few moments and meditate on the fact that Jesus has chosen to reveal the Father to you. Will Jesus stop revealing Himself to us according to John 17:25-26? _____

4. In verse 26 of John 17, Jesus speaks of an amazing gift that comes with knowing the Father. What is it? _____

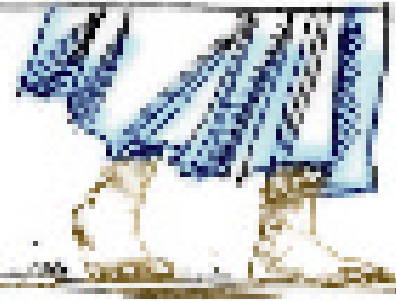
5. Can you fathom this? What does Jesus want for you? _____

6. Now look back at Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28. In Jesus' day the term 'yoke' was commonly understood. Rabbi's invited promising young men to be their disciples and to take on their yoke. These young men were trained in the Jewish law. This law was very burdensome. There were literally thousands of rules for them to obey. No human could possibly keep the law. Knowing this, how does Jesus' invitation contrast what was normally perceived by the term 'yoke'? _____

7. What do you picture when you hear the word yoke? _____

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Lesson 1 / Page 3

8. Jesus invites the weary and heavy laden (burdened) to come to Him. What is weighing you down today?
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9. Jesus invites us to exchange our yoke of burden for His yoke of freedom. Many things in this life can weigh us down. From the list below, what tends to weigh you down? Circle any that you relate to:

worry discontentment materialism busyness fear
frustration comparison selfishness depression disappointment
critical mind discouragement perfectionism legalism

Jesus invites you to exchange your yoke for His. This process occurs as we choose to come to Him and learn from Him. Spend a few minutes expressing to God your desire to learn His way of living. Invite His Spirit to begin teaching you exactly what it means to follow Jesus. Be honest with Him about where you struggle. He knows and understands. David once wrote, *"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."* (Psalm 145:18)

Learning His Word . . .

In this segment of the lesson format we will look closely at the written word of God and study the content of certain passages. This will be the objective, fact finding portion of the lesson.

Jesus' invitation to us and to all believers is to Come to Him and learn from Him. He calls those who believe in Him to be His disciples.

The word disciple simply means the pupil of a teacher; a learner, a student. The Jews were very familiar with this term as rabbis and teachers had disciples under their tutelage. A disciple learned to adhere to the teachings of their master.

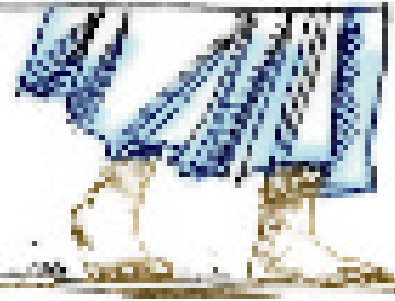
It's interesting to note that the word disciple or disciples is used around 290 times in the New Testament. The word Christian is used only 2 times and believers only around 25 times. However, the word disciple is not found outside the Gospels and Acts. This indicates that the task of the church is not simply to make believers, or Christians, but to make disciples, to help people become fully devoted followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ. This was Christ's call. Let's look at His calling of disciples from Luke 14.

1. Jesus did not mince words when it came to the cost of following Him. He never concealed the cross. Read Luke 14:25-35. What two illustrations does He give from verse 28 and 31? _____
-
-

2. We will study in a future lesson the fact that we are saved by grace through faith alone. Jesus is not talking here of salvation, He is calling believers to faith and obedience. What questions does He ask in verses 28 and 31? _____
-
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Lesson 1 / Page 4

3. According to Jesus, there are three indispensable conditions for true discipleship from Luke 14:25-33. We will explore these deeply in the weeks ahead. For now let's highlight what they are. Three times in this passage Jesus repeats the phrase, "you cannot be my disciple." Find the verses in which He states this and write what the mandate is. _____

4. The first condition is Unrivaled Love. As we get to know Jesus we will see that the last thing He meant was for us not to love our family and friends. In fact a relationship with Him enables us to love others more sincerely and deeply than ever (see Romans 5:5)! What do you think He is asking for in Luke 14:26? _____

5. Jesus not only asks us to love Him above others, but also above ourselves (v. 26). In Luke 9 Jesus says we are to deny ourselves. Why is this so difficult for us? _____

6. J. Oswald Sanders (Spiritual Leadership) says, "Love of self is soul-destroying, but love of Christ is soul-enriching." Would you agree? What do you think he is saying? _____

Jesus knew that to be associated with Him would mean some division in homes and heartache in relationships. History has proven this true. Even today in many parts of the world people are disowned by their families for placing their faith in Jesus Christ. In America today there is not much risk in claiming our faith in Christ, but that could change quickly.

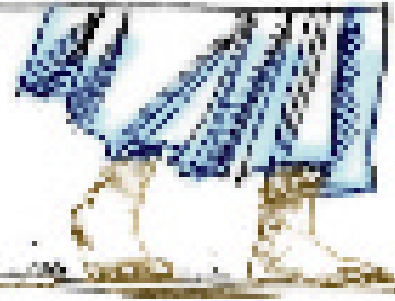
7. The second condition for true discipleship is found in verse 27. What does it say? _____

8. To fully understand what Jesus meant by this command to carry the cross, it's helpful to think of what that expression meant to the people of that day. Remember, Jesus said this before He went to the cross. The Jews of Jesus' day were very familiar with crucifixion. It was all too familiar to them. They would have quickly associated the cross as an instrument of agonizing suffering and eventual death.

To Jesus the cross was voluntary. In His mind the way of the cross led to great joy (see Hebrews 12:2). He

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Lesson 1 / Page 5

said that no one took His life, but He willingly laid it down for us because of His love for the Father (see John 10:17-18). Naturally our minds think of this as a huge burden, but that is not what Jesus says. What does He say again according to Matthew 11:28? _____

9. Carrying our own Cross. Write out Luke 14:27 in the space provided: _____

10. Would Jesus lie to us? No way! He says the truth will set us free! (See John 8:32). In Luke 9 Jesus describes this condition as denying ourselves. Think for a moment about this truth. According to Jesus, self-centeredness is burdensome, self-denial is freeing. Can you see the truth in that? Share your thoughts:

11. What is the third condition according to Luke 14:33? _____

12. Unreserved Surrender. Jesus wants us to be willing to give up what we have for Him. Christ must be given preeminence over all our earthly possessions. Why is this condition so difficult for us to consider in this day and age? _____

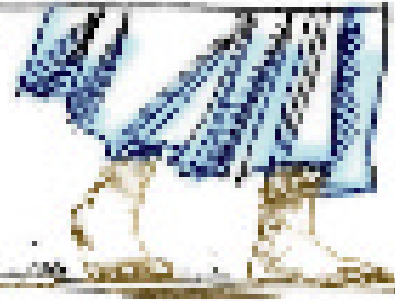
Living His Way . . .

This portion of the lesson is reserved for personal reflection and application. Jesus taught in Luke 7 that if we hear the Word but don't put it into practice we are foolish and have no foundation to weather the storms of this life. James taught that if we merely listen to the Word but not do what it says we only deceive ourselves (see James 1:22-25). So, take time to really consider what you are learning.

In preparing a study like this it is tempting to focus on the great promises in Scripture (and there are many!). We are easily drawn to the words of comfort, healing and hope. But Jesus knows that true discipleship is costly. He knows that the pathway to joy is through surrender. He knows the deceiver wants us focused on ourselves when the opposite is what leads to true life (see Luke 9:23-25).

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Lesson 1 / Page 6

1. Out of the three conditions Jesus stated Unrivaled Love, Carrying our own Cross, and Unreserved Surrender; which one grabs your attention the most and why? _____

2. Jesus clearly lays out the cost. He asks us to count it. With the cost in mind, how do Jesus' words from Matthew 11:28 comfort you? _____

3. Who is accomplishing this work in us according to Ephesians 2:10? _____

4. What does Paul teach us about this process in Philippians 1:3-6? _____

5. How does this passage from Luke 14 challenge your thinking as you consider being a disciple of Jesus Christ? _____

We began this lesson by stating the fact that we can not follow someone we don't trust and we can't trust someone we don't know. Jesus spoke these words about discipleship before He displayed the full extent of His love on the cross. These words from Luke 14 were meant to stir the pot. Perhaps they have stirred you up a bit. That's great! Hang in there relying on the fact that Jesus wants to teach you and reveal His great love to you. End your time of study in prayer discussing with your Father what you have learned in His Word this week.

Summary statement (optional)

If you could sum up in one sentence what you want to remember from this lesson, what would that statement be?

Memory verse challenge: Matthew 11:28

Helpful hint: An effective way to learn Scripture by heart is by using it to guide your prayers. Start with Matthew 11:28. You may even want to write out a prayer something like: "Lord Jesus, I want to come to you and learn from you. I want to take up your yoke that is easy. I want my soul to be at rest in you, etc."