

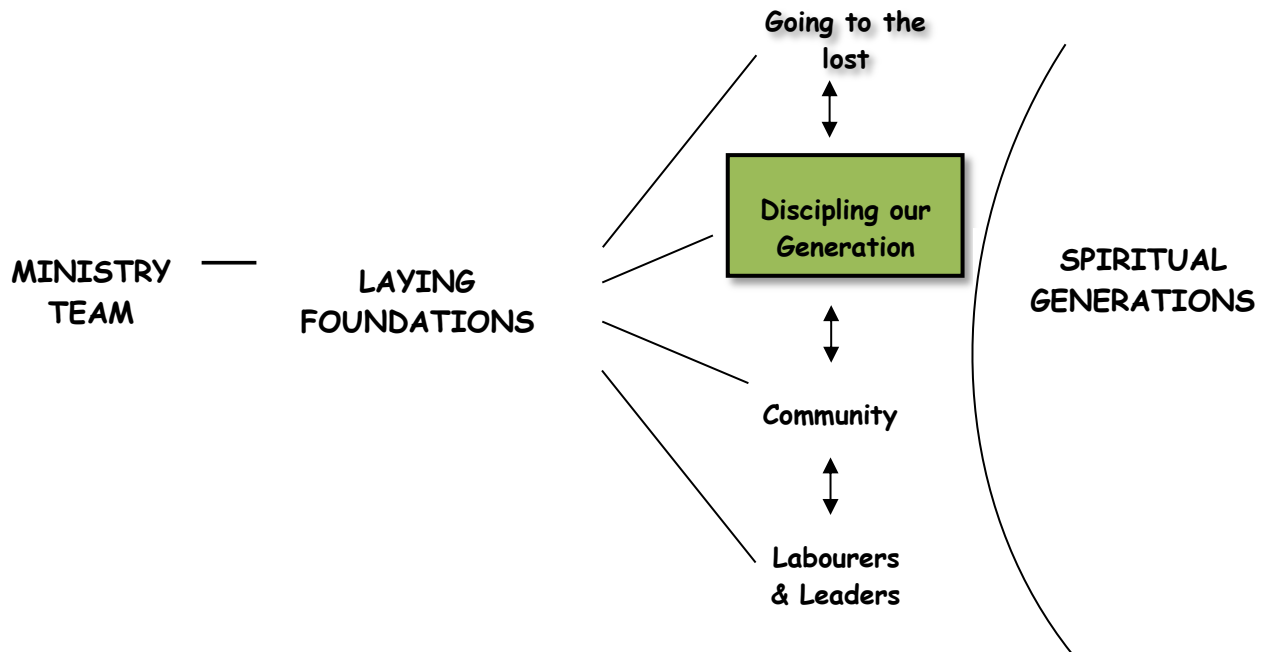
DISCIPLING OUR GENERATION

BIBLE STUDY

NAVIGATORS
— LEAD ON —

Whatever He asks. Wherever He leads.

DISCIPLING OUR GENERATION



STUDY 1 – WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

The key questions considered in this study are: What is a disciple and when does the process of discipling begin? How should a disciple live?

STUDY 2 – TRUE SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

What is it God wants to see in a person's life? How does true change occur? We consider the transformative aspect of the Gospel and dependent responsibility.

STUDY 3 - MAKING DISCIPLES

Why make disciples? Who can and should make disciples? How did Jesus and Paul make disciples? How do we make disciples? This study seeks to answer these questions.

STUDY 4 – MAKING DISCIPLES: FRAMEWORK

Where do we start and what do we focus on to develop those the Lord has given us to disciple? This study provides a framework for our part in moving people towards maturity.

STUDY 5 – MAKING DISCIPLES: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Often the hardest part of making disciples is the “how to”. How do you *practically* make disciples? What principles should you follow as you take these practical steps?

STUDY 1: WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

INTRODUCTION

‘Discipleship’ and ‘discipling’ have always been at the core of our Navigator calling. In Critical Factor II: Going to the Lost – we saw that evangelism is normally a process which ends (hopefully 😊) in conversion. While evangelism is part of the discipleship process, indeed one cannot make a disciple without leading someone to faith, it is when someone is converted that they become a disciple. Consequently, we begin our consideration of discipleship here. This is followed by an investigation of the Scriptures to see what is meant by the term disciple including how one should live as a disciple.

UNDERSTANDING CONVERSION

Read these passages and note what changes occur at conversion? What doesn’t change?

- Romans 5:1-2
- Romans 8:1-4, 9, 15-16
- Galatians 2:19-21
- Philippians 3:20-21

DEFINING DISCIPLE

Disciple is the characteristic name for those who gathered around Jesus during His ministry. It comes from the Latin word for learner or student (*discipulus*) and its root meaning is that of pupil of a teacher.

At the time of Jesus, discipleship was well known in the Jewish community. It involved an elaborate educational system in order to identify and empower the best and brightest. From childhood onwards young boys (and within certain regions young girls too) were given regimented instruction and memorization centred on the Scriptures. Those who excelled and showed promise would graduate to more intense study. Each level was more challenging than the previous. Only when they graduated, around 15 years old, could they approach a rabbi (usually aged 30 and over) and ask if he would take them as his disciple. The rabbi would test them. A starting point was that they had memorised all of the Scriptures. The rabbi would then quiz them on their interpretation and application of the Torah. If they were up to the rabbi’s required standard he would spend more time with them to gauge their passion, or *chutzpah*¹, for discipleship!

¹ *Chutzpah* is a Jewish term that roughly equates to having a “daring boldness”. Today we might say “She’s got guts!” or “He’s a real goer” to convey the same idea.

Potential disciples worked, studied, and passionately pursued the rabbi because their goal was to become one of the great rabbis. The Hebrew people didn't seek to emulate the rich or the politically powerful (those whom their pagan neighbours idolized). Instead, they sought to be shaped by those who possessed deep wisdom and insight emerging out of a robust and intimate relationship with God. A disciple was committed to something more than just an informal connection with the rabbi—they were consumed by the desire to become like the rabbi they followed!²

Today we think of a good student as someone who wants to know what the teacher knows, but a biblical disciple was someone who wanted to become like the teacher. Being a disciple was a whole of life experience.

1. This is the background understanding of discipleship that the gospel writers were immersed in. Read these texts and consider what characterized a disciple of Jesus?

- Matthew 11:28-30
- Matthew 28:19-20
- Mark 1:16-20 and 2:13-17
- Luke 9:23
- Luke 11:1-13
- Luke 14:26-33
- John 6:60-72
- John 8:31-32
- John 13:13-17
- John 13:34-35
- John 15:8-16
- Acts 4:13

² The information in this section largely comes from Rob Bell's "In His Dust", whose theology is questionable. He in turn relies on the research of Ray Vander Laan into the historical context of 1st Century Judaism (www.followtherabbi.com)

2. Summarise what the Bible says characterizes a disciple of Jesus.
3. Compare Jewish discipleship (outlined above) with Jesus discipleship. What did Jesus change from the Jewish understanding and what did he keep?
4. What is one area of discipleship you want to work on? What will you do?
5. Do you view evangelism and discipleship as distinct or part of the same process? Why? Why not?
6. What is the problem with drawing a clear distinction between 'making a decision' and 'becoming a disciple'?



SUMMARY

As we engage with non-believers in the Scriptures we need to think disciples from the beginning. This will move us away from an all too common situation where we see so called 'decisions,' but no continued growth into Christ-likeness.

Being a disciple of Jesus is much closer to an apprentice today than a pupil. Jesus doesn't take only the best and the brightest who earn their way to discipleship. He calls ordinary people to be His disciples. Discipleship is based on grace! All Christians are called to be disciples and Jesus tells every disciple to make disciples! Discipleship is a whole of life experience. There are no "converts" or "pew sitters". People who want to pick and choose which bits they will accept in the New Testament are false disciples who walk away as we saw in John 6. However, the true disciples aren't perfect. Just recall the lives of Peter, James, John or Thomas whom the New Testament shows warts and all. True disciples are those who trust Jesus with their entire life, serve Him as best they can and when they fail ask for forgiveness and turn back to following Him.

HOW SHOULD A DISCIPLE LIVE? : KINGDOM LIVING

One way, arguably the most prominent way, that the Bible describes what it means to be a disciple is that of becoming a member of the kingdom of God. Kingdoms aren't things we in western society are terribly familiar with now. A kingdom is an administration – that is, a way of ordering things and getting them done. A new administration at your work, for example, is where there is a new boss and that means things are different now; there's a new order for getting things done and perhaps some new goals. The kingdom of God is like that, but on a much grander scale! The kingdom of God is about the reign or rule of God. It affects everything – both here and now, and for eternity. And there isn't just a new boss but a King with ultimate power and authority. The kingdom of God is brought into sharper focus with the new king, Jesus. Notice Jesus' emphasis on it.

"Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:14

"After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God."
Luke 8:1

Kingdom life is eternal life. It's the life of the future come in now, which I get through faith in Christ. That's why John's Gospel talks mainly about eternal life and the synoptics talk about the kingdom. It's "already" but "not yet". It's here partially, we are partially renewed, but it's a down payment on the future. And we are called to live out the future reality in the here and now. Let's see what kingdom living should look like according to the Scriptures.

7. How should we live as disciples, as members of the kingdom of God under Jesus' kingship according to the following texts?

- Matthew 5-7

- Colossians 3:1-17

- Galatians 5:19-24

8. What effect should we have on our society, particularly in terms of justice, righteousness, care for the poor and other elements of kingdom values described here?

9. What is one thing you should do differently as you live as a member of the kingdom of God? How will you do that?



SUMMARY

When someone becomes a disciple their life will change. They have changed allegiance from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. Jesus is their king and there is a way we should live as a result.

But we all know that this will take significant transformation. How does this occur? That is the subject of our next study.