

# GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 10, 2016  
"The Marks of a Disciple"



## THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Matthew 4:18-22, John 13:34-35, John 15:12-17, Colossians 3:12-17, Matthew 28:18-20

## REFLECTION AND STUDY

### DAY 1

The Webster's Dictionary definition of disciple: *one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another; a convinced adherent of a school or individual.* As we began the discussion of the marks of a disciple we learned about what it meant to be a disciple in the first century. The majority of boys received a few years of instruction, but only the very best were able to continue on in hopes of being worthy of discipleship by a Rabbi. As you could imagine there were many people turned away and told that they weren't worthy of discipleship.

- Have you ever felt unqualified to be a disciple of Christ?
- How do you think perceived spiritual rejection changes our relationship with those around us?

**Pray and thank God for the opportunity to follow Him. Pray for others you know who may not feel worthy and look for ways to encourage them in their walk.**

### DAY 2

When Jesus came things changed drastically. Because of Him, you don't ever have to prove yourself worthy of being a disciple. You don't have to have anything done at all before you can hear those words, "follow me."

**Read Matthew 4:18-22.** Jesus chose his first disciples right where they were and required only that they shift their focus and take a risk. He offered them a tremendous opportunity and if they were brave enough to take it their lives were transformed. Author Jon Acuff said, *"God found Gideon in a hole. He found Joseph in a prison. He found Daniel in a lion's den. He has a curious habit of showing up in the midst of trouble, not the absence. Where the world sees failure, God sees future. Next time you feel unqualified to be used by God remember this, he tends to recruit from the pit, not the pedestal."* Over and over again we see Jesus call the ordinary and imperfect to be His disciples and carry the gospel to the world.

- Where were you when Jesus asked you to be his disciple?
- Have you shifted your focus and taken the risk to follow Him?

**Praise God for meeting you right where you are time and time again. Pray that you would be open to helping others around you recognize the calling into discipleship.**

### DAY 3

During the last supper Jesus brings his disciples together. **Read John 13:34-35.** Here we learn the answer— the mark of a disciple is their love. Being a disciple is not just being a member of a Christian church or claiming to follow God. A disciple is miraculously changed by the Spirit into a person with a new heart of love for Jesus and for his followers (and, of course, for his enemies). Showing love is how you can know this transformation has occurred in each other. This love is what is so attractive to unbelievers. Christ's love shines through you like a lighthouse, a beacon of hope in a dark night, letting the lost and hurt know where hope can be found.

- Who can you love and how?
- Are you living your life in such a way that others around you can see Christ's love?

**Thank God for loving you and filling you with His love for all to see. Ask God to use you to draw others closer to Him. Look for new ways to show God's love.**

## DAY 4

**Read John 15:12-17.** Jesus doesn't issue a suggestion or a recommendation. He commands His disciples to love one another, because Christian love isn't a feeling; it's an act of the will. Notice Jesus doesn't say, "This is My commandment, that you love one another." That isn't a choice. Let's face it, there are some Christians you like, and there are some you don't like. You don't like their personalities, their preferences, or their priorities. You don't have any chemistry. That's okay. You still can love them even though you don't like them. Love is a choice to seek their highest good. Jesus commanded us to do this because it is a decision of the will.

- How should you handle relationships with people in the church that you don't mesh well with?

**Pray and thank God for each and every person that reads the Growth Guide this week. Ask God to bless them and to help create unity in mind and spirit.**

## DAY 5

**Read Colossians 3:12-17.** Our actions "clothe" us like a wardrobe for all to see. On Sunday we went through the following virtues mentioned: Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, and Patience. Take some time to meditate on each virtue and evaluate yourself spiritually.

- Is there a virtue that you struggle with?
- Which comes the easiest and which the hardest?

**Pray and ask God to help you if there is a particular area where you are struggling. Thank God for His mercy and grace.**

## DAY 6

**Read Matthew 28:18-20.** This is the Great Commission. Some of us may be called to be missionaries to an unreached area of the world. However, many of us are simply called to be faithful right where we are. Disciples make disciples. As you are going somewhere—to the store, to work, to the gym, to your neighbors house—make disciples. It's as simple as reaching out, showing the love of Christ, encouraging others to follow Jesus (this is what baptism is all about), and then teaching them to obey Jesus's commands (which we find in the Bible). It is important to remember we never "finish" the discipleship process. God continually brings new people into our path, giving us fresh opportunities to start the discipleship process all over again.

- Is there anyone in your life that has been a good example of a disciple?
- How can you be a better disciple?

**Thank God for the opportunity to be used by Him. Ask God to show you how you can encourage others and tell them about Jesus. Pray for fresh opportunities to use your gifts in His service.**