

**Become Disciples – Matthew 28:19**  
**What’s the Difference Between Disciples and Christians?**

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Today we’re roughly following Chapter 2 of the book “*Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*” by Greg Ogden.

This book is having a great impact on our discipleship groups. So, I am taking us all through it – to help us all better understand what it looks like to be a Christ-follower.

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Turn in your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 28. Our core truth today comes from the next verse in the Great Commission. These are the last verses in the Book of Matthew and the last command (commissioning) we received from the Lord.

We’ll start at verse 18, but our core truth for today is in verse 19.

**Matthew 28:18 (NLT)**

*18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. (we addressed that last week)*

Then, our focus for today is,

**Matthew 28:19(a) (NLT)**

19 (Jesus says) *therefore* (because of his absolute & unconditional authority), **go and make disciples of all the nations . . .**

And here is the question we want to address today.

**When Jesus commands us (with all his authority) to “go and make disciples,” what exactly does he mean?**

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In the book we’re following, Greg Ogden opens the chapter with this statement.

*“We have adopted an unbiblical and costly distinction that says you can be a Christian without being a disciple.”*

So, here is your first two-fold question:

**Do you think our current church culture implies that you can be a Christian without being a disciple?**

**Have you ever considered the difference?**

Most often when we say someone is a Christian, we mean “they have put their faith in Jesus Christ” and we say, “Praise the Lord.” But if we really define what we mean by saying, “They put their faith in Jesus Christ” often what we would have to say is, “At some point that person said a prayer and asked Jesus to forgive them of their sin and make a place for them in heaven.”

And that is awesome... But please listen. It is an awesome start – to becoming a disciple, which is what Jesus calls us to be and what Jesus calls us to make. Putting your faith in Jesus as your Savior is the beginning of you becoming a disciple.

And so, the next question is...

**Does the Bible give us the option – to stop at believing and choose not to become a disciple?**

The word “disciple” means: “a follower.” Here is a definition of “a disciple” – adapted from *Craig Caster at Family Discipleship Ministries*.

*A disciple is a follower who walks so closely with their master that they become like him in their thinking and behavior.*

A disciple begins to think like their master.

A disciple begins to act like their master.

And that “relational process” is supposed to grow out of the initial step of believing in Jesus Christ. Again, believing is wonderful – it’s where it all begins. But the question still stands, does the Bible give us the option of stopping at “believing” and not becoming “a Christ-follower (a disciple)”?

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Here’s my second definition of a “disciple.” It comes from *Greg Ogden*.

*Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.*

A lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us. Can you see this as a growing transformation that comes out of believing in Jesus?

Being a disciple, a Christ-follower, means:

*Walking so closely with Jesus that you become more and more like him and committing to a lifelong process of dying to self and allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in you.*

**Where would you put yourself today in this comparison of a believer verses a disciple?**

So, what does it actually look like to become a follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ? Turn in your Bibles over to Mark Chapter 8. We’re going to continue in the same text we looked at last week. Last week we used Matthew Chapter 16, which is the parallel text to Mark Chapter 8 (the same event). This week we’ll go back to Mark Chapter 8 to finish looking at this event.

Last week we saw Jesus take his disciples to Caesarea Philippi where he asked them (and us) very pointedly, “*Who do you say that I am?*” And then we saw Peter’s perfect response to that question.

**Mark 8:29 (NLT)**

*29 then he (Jesus) asked them, “but who do you say I am?” Peter replied, “you are the Messiah.”* (we dealt with this question and the answer last week)

And then coming right out of Peter's clear statement of believing who Jesus is, Jesus lays out what it looks like to become a Christ-follower – a disciple. And Jesus starts by laying out the ultimate reason that he came to earth as a man, which was very different reason than what his original disciples thought.

**Mark 8:31 (NLT)**

*31 then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead.*

This is why Jesus came to earth. This was his ultimate mission. Because without this ultimate mission we could still follow Jesus as a good teacher, but we could not follow Jesus as Messiah (Messiah means, “the One come from God to save us”). Jesus Christ was born to die so that you and I could never die – but instead have eternal life.

But the disciples didn't understand this ultimate mission of Jesus.

And so, Peter, who just got an A+ for believing who Jesus was, suddenly gets an F- when it comes to understanding Christ's ultimate mission.

**Mark 8:32 (NLT)**

*32 as he (Jesus) talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.*

That's a big mistake for Peter, but it does set up a great lesson for us.

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Because in Mark 8:33 we read,

**Mark 8:33 (NLT)**

*33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. “get away from me, Satan!” He said. “you are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.”*

How does Jesus feel about us seeing his mission on earth from a human point of view? Apparently, he does not appreciate that at all.

And in case you think Jesus is only making this point to Peter, look carefully at the beginning of Mark 8:33.

**Mark 8:33 (NLT)**

*33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter . . .*

Jesus made sure he had everyone's attention before he made it clear how he felt about Peter seeing things merely from a human point of view.

Here's a question.

**Why does Jesus call Peter "Satan" for see the ultimate mission of Christ merely from a human point of view?**

So then, Jesus calls the crowd over to join the disciples and he begins to explain what is required – and what it means – to become a Christ-follower (a disciple).

**Mark 8:34 (NLT)**

*34 then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "if any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.*

It is significant that Jesus first called the crowd over to listen as he explained what it meant to be a disciple. Jesus didn't say to the twelve disciples, "Okay this is just for you guys – just the elite." Instead, he purposefully called all of the crowd over to hear these critical words.

Then, Jesus says to the entire crowd, (again in Mark 8:34),

**Mark 8:34 (NLT)**

*34 . . . "if any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.*

Three requirements to be a Christ-follower.

- 1) Give up your own way
- 2) Take up your cross
- 3) Follow Jesus

First, Jesus says, "If you want to be my follower – you must give up your own way."

I believe Jesus starts with the hardest part – "give up your own way" because if there is anything we absolutely do not want to give up, it's doing things our own way and doing

what we want. And I believe if we can truly embrace this first requirement, the other two will come easily (by comparison).

The literal translations use the phrase “deny your ‘self’” here. “If you want to be my follower, you must deny your ‘self.’” Self is a word the Bible uses to refer to your flesh – your sin nature. It’s the thing that causes you to focus on your “self,” make decisions for your “self”, and to live for your “self.”

And Jesus simply says in order to follow him, self must go. More and more of self must die in order for more and more of Jesus to live in you.

When you see a Christian acting just as self-interested, self-focused and self-ish as a non-believer, it’s because they are holding on to – self. They refuse to “give up their own way.” They refuse to “deny self.”

So, tell me,

**What would it look like, if you took one critical area of self and completely gave it up, denied it completely, in order to follow Jesus more truly?**

And if you have a hard time “giving up self” you will never be able to embrace the second requirement.

Because next, in Mark 8:34, we read,

**Mark 8:34 (NLT)**

***34 [Jesus said] . . . “if any of you wants to be my follower, you must . . . Take up your cross . . .***

This does not mean wearing a cross necklace or having a cross tattoo on your bicep. Every person in this crowd that Jesus was talking to understood exactly what this meant, because they saw people carrying their own cross on a regular basis. They knew, if you were carrying your own cross, you were taking your last walk on death row. You were walking “the green mile.” You were as good as dead.

And for followers of Jesus, to carry your own cross means – your life is not your own. You live as “dead to self.”

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Do you see how this goes with the first requirement of denying self and giving up your own way? Self is a strong slave master and self is not going to let you go easily. And so self requires a radical death – a crucifying – in order for you to truly begin following Jesus.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20,

**Galatians 2:20 (NLT)**

***20 my old self has been crucified with Christ. it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . .***

In order for you to start following Jesus you first have to stop following self. And being set free from the slave master of self can sometimes take some radical “crucifying” in your life.

Here’s a two-part question for you.

**What part of your self-life would take (or is taking) a radical “crucifying” in order for you to follow Jesus?**

**What does this “crucifying of self” look like, for you, personally?**

And then finally, in Mark 8:34,

**Mark 8:34(c) (NLT)**

***34 [Jesus said], “if any of you wants to be my follower (my disciple), you must . . . Follow me.***

Why is the final requirement of becoming a disciple to “follow Jesus?” Possibly because of what Jesus means when he says “follow me.”

There are two primary words in the Greek that we translate “follow.”

The first is pronounced: **syne-po-re-o-mai**. This Greek word means “to go along with” or “travel along with one another.”

In Luke 14:25 we read,

**Luke 14:25 (NLT)**

***25 a large crowd was following Jesus . . .***

In English we translate this word, follow. But this word just means the people were “chasing Jesus from place to place.”

The second Greek word we translate “follow” is pronounced : **ak-o-loo-theo**. This Greek word means “To accept and follow the leadership, commands, and guidance of another, usually with physical action involved.”

Jesus says to become a disciple you must:

- 1) Give up your own way
- 2) Crucify self
- 3) Follow his leadership, his commands, and his guidance

And this entire relationship begins with that faithful prayer of salvation. Then, as you walk closer and closer with Jesus, self becomes more and more of an enemy, and you become more willing to crucify self so that the life of Jesus can grow in you, and more and more you desire his leadership and his guidance.

That is what it means to become a disciple.

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And finally, look at the reward for making the commitment to become a disciple.

**Mark 8:35-37 (NLT)**

***35 if you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the good news, you will save it.***

***36 and what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?***

***37 is anything worth more than your soul?***

The only option we see in the Bible is for true believers to become disciples, Genuine Christ-followers.

So, to become a disciple, first, you put your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and make him your true Lord. And then, you begin the path of

- 1) Giving up your own way
- 2) Crucifying self
- 3) Following his leadership, his commands, and his guidance

The Bible clearly calls us to become true disciples, genuine Christ-followers. God does not offer any other way of faith.

**What are your thoughts on this overall message?**

**What is your response?**