

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 using the letter clues. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher using only the letter clues.



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



Activity 2: Team Toss Review

Students will compete in teams answering questions by tossing a beanbag onto the answers taped to the floor.

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



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



TEAM TOSS REVIEW

- ☐ Print the Team Toss Review Game Components from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- ☐ Keep the Review Questions and Teacher Guide for your use.
- ☐ Print onto cardstock and cut out one set of Answer Cards.

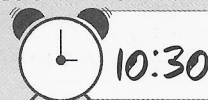
- ☐ Team Toss Review Questions and Teacher Guide
- ☐ Answer Cards
- ☐ Masking Tape
- ☐ Beanbags



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."

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





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 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. In Lesson 10 we discussed who Jesus proclaimed Himself to be. We started by talking about God.

- ? What name did God use for Himself when He was talking to Moses at the burning bush? *I AM who I AM.*
- ? And what did Jesus tell the Pharisees about Himself? *Before Abraham was, I AM.*

➤ 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.

- ? What did Jesus mean when He said that? Who was Jesus claiming to be? *God in the flesh.*
- ? Jesus was telling the Pharisees that He was God in the flesh. Why did Jesus—God in the flesh—come to earth? *Allow discussion. To save His people from their sins.*

Jesus is God in the flesh. Jesus is the great I AM. And there is no other way to heaven and eternal life with God except through Jesus.

Jesus's life and His Words confirmed that He was God in the flesh. His miracles showed His power over nature (*Lesson 2 Lesson Theme Poster*), disease (*Lesson 3 Lesson Theme Poster*), death (*Lesson 4 Lesson Theme Poster*), and more. His teaching was unlike anyone before Him. Many people loved and followed Him, while many Jews hated Him because of His actions and His claims. They wanted to kill Him. And they tried several times. They would finally succeed when Jesus died on the Cross—but not before the time God had planned for Jesus to die.

Jesus asked much from those who did love and want to follow Him. It wouldn't be easy to be His disciple. That is what we are going to read about today. What does a true disciple of Jesus look like?

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 16:24–26. As we read and study, we will see that Jesus is asking more from His followers than just learning about Him. Being a follower of Jesus means changing your life! Let's read, and you'll see what I mean. *Assign readers to read Matthew 16:24–26.*

Matthew 16:24–26

EXAMINE THE WORD

We are going to answer some questions about these verses and see if we can understand what Jesus was saying.

Observe the Text

- ? First, who was Jesus talking to in these verses? *Matthew 16:24. His disciples.*
- ? What must we deny to follow Jesus? *Matthew 16:24. Ourselves.*
- ? And what must we take up? *Matthew 16:24. Our cross.*
- ? Does Jesus mean we will all die on a cross? *Allow discussion.*

No. Jesus was obedient to God. And in His obedience He would die on the Cross. Jesus was willing to give everything up for others—for sinners! What Jesus is saying here is that He wants His disciples—anyone who wants to follow Him—to be willing to sacrifice for Him. That probably won't mean dying on a cross. But it does mean denying yourself and thinking of others before yourself. And that's not easy!

- ? Take a look at your class notes. Let's review what we just talked about. 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 Christ? *Assign a reader. Cross. Have students complete #2.*
- ? And #3? Still from Matthew 16:24. What is the third thing Jesus told His disciples. Will someone read that? *Assign a reader. Follow. Have students complete #3.*
- ? OK. Let's look at Matthew 16:25. Who will lose their lives? *Those who desire to save their lives.*
- ? And who will find their lives? *Those who lose their lives.*
- ? What do you think Jesus meant here? *Allow discussion.*

Jesus was talking about two different lives here. Our life on earth is our *physical* life. Our life after we die is our *eternal* life. Both are very real. What Jesus is saying is if we live our whole life on earth focused on ourselves 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 miss out on eternal life. But, if we are willing to deny ourselves, give up the things of the world, and make Jesus the most important thing in our life, we will gain eternal life and will spend it in heaven with Jesus.

- ? Back to the class notes. Will someone read #4 for us? How will you complete that? *Assign a reader. Lose. Have students complete #4.*
- ? And what about #5? How will you finish that? *Assign a reader. Find. Have students complete #5.*

Look back in your Bible to 16:26. Let's read that again. *Assign a reader.*

- ? What is Jesus asking in this verse? What is He talking about gaining? *The world.*
- ? If a man gains the whole world, what might he lose? *Matthew 16:26. His own soul.*

Discover the Truth

And then Jesus asked, "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
Matthew 16:26.

- ? If we give up our soul while we live on earth, what will happen when we die? *Allow discussion.*

We will suffer in hell and will not have the joy of eternal life with Jesus. This is serious stuff. The world doesn't offer true life. Jesus is the only way, truth, and life. But we, by nature, love the world and the things of the world. True disciples of Jesus are men and women who are willing to put Jesus first—before the things of the world. They are willing to lose their life here so they can save it for all eternity.



This is not easy! And it could mean giving up our comforts, our things, and sometimes even our very life for Jesus. But if our hearts are filled with love for the Savior, if we believe in Him, trust Him, and accept His forgiveness, even the greatest cross will seem light. If we are willing to deny ourselves and lose our life for His sake—we will find life for all eternity.

This is a life-long process. As we grow and learn more about Jesus, the gospel, and all He did for us, it will get easier to be a true disciple of His.

? Will someone read #6 on your class notes. How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Soul. Have students complete #6.*

? And how about #7. Who will read that? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. First. Have students complete #7.*



READ THE WORD

Luke 14:26

As I said, being a disciple of Jesus means putting Jesus first before EVERYTHING the world offers us. Turn to Luke 14:26. Jesus is speaking in this verse. He is talking about something else we must be willing to give up. Someone read that for us. *Assign a reader. Luke 14:26.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

What does that mean? Let's talk about it.

Observe the Text

? Who is speaking here? *Jesus.*

? What does Jesus say we must hate? He mentions seven different things. What are they? *Father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and our own life.*

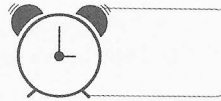
Discover the Truth

Wow! This does not make sense on the surface 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 prefer anyone over Him. 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.

? With that in mind, will someone read #8 on the class notes? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Person. Have students complete #8.*

Special people in our lives are a blessing. They can 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 above Him in our life. Jesus is Lord and Savior. He alone can help us to find our life—our eternal life. He is God who came to earth so that sinners could be saved. He is worthy of all of our praise and should be the most important thing in our life.



READ THE WORD

Let's read one more passage. This sums up all we have been talking about so far. Turn to Matthew 22:36–37. Let's read this. *Assign a reader.*

Matthew 22:36–37

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

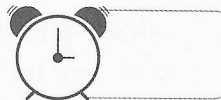
- ? Who is the Teacher here? *Matthew 22:36. Jesus.*
Yes. The Pharisees were gathered together, and one of them was asking Jesus a question.
- ? What did he ask? *Matthew 22:36. Which is the greatest commandment?*
- ? And what was Jesus's answer? Look in Matthew 22:37. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*

Discover the Truth

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

If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will be able to lose our life for His sake. And in doing that, we will gain our own soul and find eternal life with Him in heaven.

- ? Will someone read #9 on your class notes? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. All. Have students complete #9.*



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



Team Toss Review

MATERIALS

- ☐ Team Toss Review Questions and Teacher Guide
- ☐ Answer Cards (printed on cardstock)
- ☐ Masking Tape
- ☐ Beanbags

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into 2–3 teams. Tape the Answer Cards on the floor. Tape a line on the floor at a challenging distance from the answers. Present the questions from the Teacher Guide alternating between teams. If Team 1 answers correctly, award one point for the correct answer. If not, allow Team 2 to answer. Then allow teams to toss the beanbag to the appropriate answer on the floor. Award the team that gets the beanbag closest to the correct answer another point. Continue play and repeat questions as time allows.

We read several passages of Scripture in this lesson. We're going to play a fun game to see how much you remember. Teams will take turns answering the question I give. Each correct answer will earn one point.

Then each team will try to toss the beanbag to the correct answer on the floor. The team that gets closest to the right answer will earn another point.

Play the game using the Team Toss Review Questions and Teacher Guide.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

This game provided a good way for us to review what we've heard about being a true disciple of Jesus Christ. *Congratulate the winning team.*

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.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Following Jesus is not easy. Jesus said if anyone wants to follow Him he must take up his cross and follow Him. Jesus wants His followers to love Him above all else—even above family and material possessions. That's hard because our sinful nature wants all the things of this world. Instead of seeking after money, treasures, and stuff, 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 appears to be very difficult. But the truth is if we really understand what Jesus did for us and accept His free gift of eternal life, something happens. The Bible says that we become new creations in Christ. And the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that changes our heart and makes us new creations. The Bible says our old self, with the heart that loved the worldly things more than God, will be replaced with a new heart that wants to love God more than anything the world can offer.

That change comes to believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our lives change because we are grateful for the sacrifice Jesus made for us. As we learn more about Jesus, we realize that we WANT to do what pleases Him. We WANT to obey His call on our life. We WANT to give up the things that we know don't please Him.

The Bible also tells us that Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us live the life He wants us to live.

? Look at the bottom of your class notes. You will see Philippians 1:6. This verse is written to followers of Jesus, people who have accepted Jesus and His saving work on the Cross. Will someone read that for us? *Assign a reader.*
Philippians 1:6.

? Who begins the good work in believers? *God.*

? Who will complete the good work He began? *God.*

Yes. God begins the good work in believers through faith. Anyone who confesses his sins to God, repents, believes, and receives God's free gift of salvation will be saved. And God will continue to help believers to live a life of obedience and faith in Him until the day that Jesus returns in the glory of the Father.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students 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.
- Ask God to make us true followers of Jesus, willing to make Him first in our lives.

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