

CHAPTER ONE

# WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

The simplest meaning of a disciple is that he is a “learner” or “follower.” Socrates had disciples, John the Baptist had disciples, and Gandhi had disciples. But to be a disciple of Jesus Christ involves much more than following any human leader.

## JESUS' DEFINITION OF A DISCIPLE

1. Read Luke 14:25-33.
  - a. According to these verses, what characterizes a disciple?
 

Verse 26 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 27 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 33 \_\_\_\_\_

(In order to more fully understand the use of the word *hate*, read Matthew 10:37.)
  - b. Do you think these characteristics in Luke 14 are external actions, internal attitudes, or both? Explain your answer.
 

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2. From the following verses, what actions does Jesus say should characterize the lives of his disciples? (After your answer, record a cross-reference for each verse.)

ACTION	CROSS-REFERENCE
<i>John 8:31</i> _____	_____
<i>John 13:34-35</i> _____	_____
<i>John 15:8</i> _____	_____

3. Using the Scriptures in questions 1 and 2, write a brief definition of a disciple.
 

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4. Jesus' standards for his disciples are high. Why do you think this is so?
 

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## THE DISCIPLE IS A LEARNER

Jesus was a lifelong learner. In his early years we see him in the temple, listening and asking questions (Luke 2:46). During his ministry we see him urging his disciples to “learn this lesson

from the fig tree" (Matthew 24:32). The writer of Hebrews said of Christ's life on earth, "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

5. What attitude should characterize a learner? *Proverbs 12:1 and 4:13*

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6. From whom can we learn?

*Proverbs 4:1*

*Proverbs 27:17*

*Matthew 11:29*

*John 6:45*

*Hebrews 13:7-8*

7. In 1 Corinthians 14:20, what did Paul encourage the Corinthians to do?

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8. Why is it important for you to receive instruction?

*Proverbs 11:14*

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9. Read Proverbs 24:30-34. What can you learn about the man who lacks judgment?

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## THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

10. What does Jesus encourage those who want to be his disciples to consider? *Luke 14:28-32*

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11. What might it cost you to be Jesus' disciple? *Luke 9:57-62*

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12. Read Romans 12:1-2. How would you explain the meaning of the term *living sacrifice*?

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13. Read Luke 9:23-26.

a. What do you think it means to deny yourself?

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b. What does it mean to "take up your cross daily"?

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c. How can you save your life?

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*“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”*

—JIM ELLIOT\*

**14.** Prayerfully consider your life in light of the passages studied in questions 10–13. What new commitment do you need to make?

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### DILIGENCE AND DISCIPLINE

**15.** In the New Testament the Christian life is compared to running a race. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

a. How did Paul say we should run the race?

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b. List other important factors in running a race. How can these principles be applied to the “race” of a disciple?

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**16.** Hebrews 12:1-2 gives additional insights into this race.

a. What can hinder a Christian from finishing the race?

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b. How should you run?

\* From *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, ed. Elisabeth Elliot (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978), 174.

c. Where should your eyes be fixed as you run?

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d. In what ways does Jesus’ life motivate you to run?

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**17.** Read 2 Timothy 2:3-6, where Paul compared the Christian to three types of people.

a. What are they?

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b. Pick one of these types of people and further describe how such a lifestyle might represent a disciplined, diligent Christian disciple.

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**18.** Read Hebrews 6:11-12. How do diligence and discipline relate to being Christ’s disciple? (You may want to use a dictionary to help you understand the full meaning of these words.)

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There are four steps in completing a course of action: (1) desire, (2) decision, (3) determination, and (4) discipline. For example, consider a man who desires to meet with God before going to

work. He realizes that in order to have enough time, he must get up early, so he decides to get up at 6:30 a.m.



The next day he oversleeps because his desire and his decision alone could not get him out of bed. He then *determines* to use an alarm clock to help him get up.



But the real test comes when the alarm goes off. *Discipline* must then come into focus. He must shut off the alarm clock and not go back to bed.



Good habits can be developed as a result of consistent discipline. Consistency requires thought and effort on a daily basis.

**19. a.** What attitude characterizes a mature Christian?  
*Philippians 3:12-15*

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b. What attitudes do you think would characterize an immature Christian?

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**20.** What did Paul teach about diligence in Colossians 3:17?

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**21.** Why is the attitude of your heart so important in being Christ's disciple? *Proverbs 4:23*

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**22.** What are some areas in which you should be exercising greater discipline? How should you be doing it?

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**Remember These Points**

Using the chapter subtopics as an outline, write your own summary of this chapter.

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