

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to accept:

1. that Christians have been called to become disciples of Jesus Christ
2. that 'a disciple' is a follower of Jesus Christ who learns from him as he follows and who grows in the specific characteristics of a disciple. A 'disciple' is a mature believer.

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is listening to God's voice.

Theme: Listening to God's voice

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

Worship is not simply singing, praying and doing, but also listening. Worship is:

- practising to become aware of God's presence
- giving attention to the reality of God's Holy Spirit dwelling in you
- listening with concentration to what God is saying to you when you read or hear God's Word
- not going beyond what is written in the Bible – not adding to or subtracting from the Bible
- noticing God's acts and guidance in the circumstances of your life
- distinguishing between truth and lies. Evil spirits fire burning arrows at you (Ephesians 6:16) and many of them are lies and twisting of God's Word. God's Spirit only speaks the truth and will never say anything to you in contradiction to what is written in the Bible (John 16:13). Therefore it is important that you continually test the subjective voice in your spirit to see whether it conforms to the objective words in the Bible (1 John 4:1-6).

3. Worship

Remain silent. Deliberately enter into God's presence. Listen as someone reads Luke 6:20-45 with short intervals between paragraphs. Practise listening to what God's says to you through the Bible.

Finally ask some people to share what impressed them or what they experienced.

Luke 6:20-45

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²²Blessed are you when men hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

²³Rejoice in that Day and leap for joy, because great is
your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers
treated the prophets.

²⁴But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

²⁷But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do
good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you,
pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you
on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone
takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes
what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to
others as you would have them do to you.

³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to
you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. ³³And if
you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is
that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. ³⁴And if you lend to
those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is
that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to
be repaid in full. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good to
them, and lend to them without expecting to get
anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you
will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the
ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father
is merciful.

³⁷Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

³⁹He also told them this parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

⁴¹“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴²How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁴³“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Disciples

Read or explain in your own words.

1. A disciple is an adherent of a teacher

Philosophers as Socrates and Plato and religious leaders as Moses (John 9:28), the Pharisees and John the Baptist (Mark 2:18) had disciples. Also Jesus had a crowd of disciples following him (Luke 6:17). The most common meaning of the word ‘disciple’ is an adherent or someone who associates with a teacher. Such people are interested in what the teacher teaches without making any commitment.

2. A disciple is a follower and learner

True disciples of Jesus Christ are more than merely adherents, but are active followers who learn as they follow. Jesus calls them to follow him (Matthew 4:19) and learn from him (Matthew 11:28). Thus people from various social positions followed Jesus Christ and learned from him for a period of about three years. They had to first learn to be followers and students before they could become leaders and teachers that equip others. In their turn the disciples of Jesus Christ became teachers with their own disciples.

A disciple learns by observing, listening and imitating his teacher. He learns as he follows. He observes how his teacher fulfils his task; how his teacher teaches; how his teacher answers questions; how his teacher responds to opposition. A disciple learns by practising what he has been taught and by gaining experience in following his teacher.

3. A disciple has some special characteristics

Although all Christians were called ‘disciples’ in the first century, the word ‘disciple’ had very specific characteristics in the teaching of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ gives Jesus Christ the first place in his life, lives according to the teachings of Jesus, prays according to his perfect will, loves other disciples as Jesus loves him and bears much and lasting fruit in his life.

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: The characteristics of a disciple

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|---------------------|--|
| Day 1 | Luke 6:39-49
A disciple learns from Jesus |
| Day 2 | Luke 9:23-27
A disciple follows Jesus, carrying his cross |
| Day 3 | Luke 9:57-62
A disciple follows without looking back |
| Day 4 ^{BS} | Luke 14:25-35
A disciple prefers Jesus above family and possessions |
| Day 5 | Luke 24:45-48.
A disciple tells the gospel |
| Day 6 | Matthew 10:24-33
A disciple cannot avoid persecution |
| Day 7 | Matthew 28:16-20
A disciple makes other disciples |
| Day 8 | John 8:31-36
A disciple remains in the words of Jesus |
| Day 9 | John 13:34-35
A disciple loves as Jesus loves |
| Day 10 | John 15:5-8
A disciple bears fruit to God’s glory |

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.

If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: The characteristics of a disciple

- What is a disciple?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to Christ?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to the Bible?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to prayer?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to other Christians?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to producing fruit?
- What is the characteristic of a disciple with respect to obedience?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following question and record their answer:

- “Which characteristic of a disciple are you currently developing? For example:
 - Putting Christ in the centre of your life?
 - Remaining in his Word?
 - Praying according to his will”
 - Loving as he loves?
 - Active obedience to his Word?
 - Producing fruit?

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other’s previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

DISCIPLES Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all.”
“If anyone would come after me,
he must deny himself
and take up his cross daily
and follow me.”

Luke 9:23 (NIV)

3. Review of the Bible books

All 27 books of the New Testament

The 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

The 1 Historical book: Acts

The 13 Letters of Paul: Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

The 8 General Letters: Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1&2&3 John, Jude,

The 1 Apocalypse: Revelation

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: Discipleship in the kingdom of God

1. Bible Study

Make use of the method of studying parables in the Bible and study:

Luke 14:25-35

²⁵Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

³¹“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

³⁴“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? ³⁵It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

2. Emphasis

(This emphasis must NOT be made known to the group members before the Bible Study has been completed. Best is that the group members discover the emphasis themselves).

- A disciple must first count the cost before he makes a decision or choice.
- But a disciple must choose: for or against Jesus Christ. Neutrality with respect to Jesus Christ is impossible

3. Explanation for the group leader

(The Bible study method for studying parables)

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is told in a particular context and may have an application or explanation. From these elements we must try to grasp the one message of the parable.

[Step 1] Understand the story of the parable.

There are three parables:

- (1) The parable of the rash builder (14:28-30).
- (2) The parable of the reckless king (14:31-32).
- (3) The parable of the salt that has lost its saltiness (14:34-35).

[Step 2] Study the context of the parable and determine the elements of the parable.

The context of the parables (14:25-27) and the explanation or application of the parable (14:33-35) consist of teaching the characteristics of a disciple.

The characteristics of a disciple

14:26.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ is completely dedicated to Jesus Christ. 'To hate' here does not mean anything negative as 'to dislike' or 'to abhor' or 'to abandon', but means something more neutral. It means 'to prefer less', or 'not to give the first place' (cf. Matthew 10:37).

A disciple of Jesus Christ loves Jesus Christ above all other people. If he has to make a choice between obeying a member of his family or Jesus Christ, then he must reject the wish of the family. The highest loyalty of a disciple belongs to Jesus Christ and no other relationship may come in between!

A disciple chooses unconditionally for Jesus Christ as his Lord and Leader. He makes all other loyalties subservient to his commitment to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ must have the pre-eminent place in everything (Colossians 1:18)! A disciple prefers Jesus Christ above his parents, above his wife and children, above his government, above his friends and even above his own ambitions and wishes!

14:27.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ sacrifices his own ambitions and freedom in order to follow Jesus Christ. He carries his own 'cross' behind Jesus. This means that he chooses a life of selfless sacrifice and accepts the rejection and suffering that comes with being a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus Christ, a disciple must fall into the ground and die before it can produce many 'seeds' (John 12:24).

14:33.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ is willing to give up all his possessions, relationships, ambitions and duties if necessary to become and to remain a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he has to make a choice between his possessions, ambitions, success, power, fame, honour and the avoidance of shame on the one hand and following Jesus Christ on the other hand, then he must reject his possessions, ambitions, success, power, fame, honour and the avoidance of shame. The highest loyalty of a disciple belongs to Jesus Christ and nothing may displace it!

14:34-35.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ is 'salt that has not lost its saltiness'. 'Salt' is a substance that combats decay, cleanses wounds and gives taste to food. True disciples of Jesus Christ are like salt that has preserved its property of being 'salty'. They combat spiritual and moral decay, bring healing and restoration to sick and broken people and give flavour to all relationships and activities in which they participate.

The formal, legalistic religion of the Pharisees and teachers of the law together with their 613 man-made rules which they enforced on their followers is as salt that has lost its saltiness. Man-made religion is useless (Matthew 15:9). People who devise such a religion together with their followers will be cast out of God's kingdom into utter darkness (Matthew 8:12).

[Step 3] Identify the relevant details in the story of the parable.

14:28-30.

The decision to build a tower is used as an illustration of someone who decides to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. However, such a decision has consequences for himself and also for the honour of Jesus Christ.

The important message of this parable is that the prospective disciple must first sit down and count the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ!

14:31-32.

A king who wants to go to war with his great army against another king who has a much larger army stands for King Jesus Christ who is already on his way against you in order to subdue you under his authority. He wants to conquer and subdue you by his love and salvation. But if necessary he will conquer you by judgment and destruction. But he will conquer you (Philippians 2:9-11)!

The important message of this parable is that the prospective disciple must first sit down and calculate what his chances are. But then he must act and act very

quickly, because the stronger King is already on his way towards him! And that King will conquer!

[Step 4] Identify the messages of the three parables.

A parable has only one message. All three parables are related and teach about discipleship in God's kingdom.

The message of the parable of the rash builder
(14:28-30):

You are responsible to count the cost of discipleship. You must look before you jump. You must count the cost before you follow.

The message of the parable of the reckless king
(14:31-32):

You are responsible to choose for or against discipleship. You may consider your chances, but you must choose before it is too late. You must jump; you must act!

The only choice a person has is to submit wholeheartedly to the King, Jesus Christ, or perish. He must choose between being saved and being doomed. He must commit himself to become a disciple of Jesus Christ or he will be thrown out of the kingdom!

Neutrality with regard to Jesus Christ (and following Jesus Christ as his disciple) is impossible! Jesus said: He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30).

Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save people who acknowledge that they are lost. He will not save self-confident and self-assertive people. He will save lost people (Luke 19:10). But those who reject him will be crushed (Matthew 21:44). Jesus Christ is already on his way! You will encounter (meet) him at the decisive moment, either when you die (thus very soon) or when he returns (suddenly and unexpectedly). The question is: Will you meet him as one submitted to him or as one opposing him?

The message of the entire Bible is about God speaking and acting with a view either to save those who believe in Jesus Christ or to condemn those who reject Jesus Christ. There is no middle way!

The message of the parable of the salt that has lost its saltiness
(14:34-35):

You are responsible to be salt that has not lost its property of being salty. You must prevent decay in this world, cleanse the wounds of hurting people and give taste to a tasteless society.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ has influence: he battles against the spiritual and moral decay of society; he brings healing to sick and broken people; and he brings a delightful taste to all the relationships and activities in which he participates.

Discipleship is one of the foundational characteristics of God's kingdom. A disciple of Jesus Christ has counted the cost of following Jesus Christ; he is actually following Jesus Christ; and he has influence on people around him.

[Step 5] Check the message with cross-references.

- *Matthew 10:37.* Jesus Christ must have the pre-eminent (first and most important) place in a disciple's life.
- *Matthew 10:38.* A disciple must be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.
- *Matthew 5:14-16.* Disciples of Jesus Christ are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, especially in their works.

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.