

PLAN 4: What does true discipleship (following God and leading others for God) look like?

28 days (varying times that average out at roughly 10 minutes per day)

In this plan we will look at the Bible through the lens of discipleship. What does it truly look like to follow God as a disciple, and to lead others to Him (which is also a part of being a disciple)? We'll start by looking at the book of Matthew, which is the Gospel account with Jesus and His disciples (so we'll see a ton of examples there of how they lived their everyday lives). Then we'll transition into the book of Acts, which is named that because it was basically the "actions" that the disciples took after Jesus died and rose again, so we see what city they ministered in, how they ran the church, etc. - a direct look at original discipleship and how to follow God now that Jesus has left this world. After this, we will look at a multitude of good and bad examples of discipleship (which again is basically just following God and leading for God) in the Old Testament - how the Israelites, kings and priests both did and didn't follow God the right way, and how this can apply to our everyday lives. We will end this plan by looking at the ultimate sacrificial follower, James, the biological brother of Jesus, who willingly took a backseat for the greater good, and then we will finish the plan for good by looking at a couple of various verses and how they apply to following God.

Day 1: Matthew 1-6

Day 2: Matthew 7-12

Day 3: Matthew 13-18

Day 4: Matthew 19-24

Day 5: Matthew 25-28 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here the life of Jesus. When we look at following God and being true disciples, there is no better example than Jesus. His willingness to leave the glory of Heaven and come down into Earth to live a painful life, and ultimately His willingness to surrender on the cross instead of fighting back and having momentary pleasures, these things that Jesus did and calls us to do, this is the greatest example of following God. We have seen also in this story the actions of the disciples, some of them faithful and outstanding acts, and other actions have stood out as poor examples (in Matthew 26:14-15 Judas betraying what was right for what was pleasing in the moment as we all do with sin, also Peter beginning to sink when walking on water because of his fear towards the things he faced in Matthew 14:30-31, which we all encounter on our walk with Christ, among other examples). We now turn to the book of Acts, which tells the story of the "Actions" of these disciples and Early Church leaders after the death of Jesus Christ (this should give us great insight into true discipleship now that the original disciples and followers have taken center stage).

Day 6: Acts 1-6

Day 7: Acts 7-11

Day 8: Acts 12-16

Day 9: Acts 17-22

Day 10: Acts 23-28 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here a similar narrative as we saw in Matthew - true discipleship. In Matthew, the disciples submitted to Jesus, and Jesus submitted to God in leading them and in how He led them (doing it for God and in a Godly way). Here in Acts, the Early Christian Church submitted to its leaders (many of them the disciples), and the disciples submitted their work and all that they did to Jesus and to His ways. So we see a pattern here: there are times to lead and times to follow, and ultimately everyone, especially the man called to be on the cross, follows God. The Apostle Paul receives a calling in Acts 23:11 from the Lord to travel to Rome. In the chapters that follow, he experiences opposition through violent mobs coming after him, storms and shipwrecks - and yet through it all he went to Rome. He followed God when he didn't like the journey or where they were going in the moment - this is true discipleship. We now turn to an example from Exodus.

Day 11: Exodus 32:1-26 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here what it looks like to be a poor disciple, a bad example of following God. In verse 1 it makes clear that Moses was taking a long time, and as the story goes on they disobey God for this reason. It's like that sometimes - you're tired of waiting for God's plan with a relationship, and so you do porn and screw around with the wrong people. You're tired of waiting for your breakthrough, so you give in, whatever it may be. Waiting. You're tired of waiting. It would be like sitting at a nice restaurant, but the food takes forever, and fast food is right across the street - don't give up on God's amazing plan for your life because you're tired of waiting. Notice how Aaron was quick to give the people what they wanted as long as it gave him power (by leading them in sin, at least he was leading them - this is the same thing as a church making exceptions or changes that shouldn't be made in order to receive some sort of benefit, whether money or approval). Aaron didn't care about the sin, that's why he even says "out came this calf!" as if it were an accident. Selfish, and now unwilling to accept responsibility and act on it - this, in our everyday lives, is what not to do. Much like Joshua in this passage pretending he didn't know what was happening - true disciples have to stand up for what is right, for God, BOLDLY. Moses, on the other hand, was very patient and kept others in mind instead of himself (convincing God to relent from destroying the sinful people, though it would have benefited him and basically made him the next Adam because God would use HIM to create a new and improved human bloodline). But again, Moses kept others in mind, and so God favored his actions - these are a few good and bad examples of true discipleship in our everyday lives. We now turn to an example from the book of Numbers.

Day 12: Numbers 10:33-17:11 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here a slew of important examples of how NOT to follow God in our everyday lives. We first see the Israelite people complain against God's plan to bring them into the Promised Land because it is

difficult. This bothers God. That always surprised me. God knew things were hard, and He was actually making it that way, so why was He offended by this? Because they had the wrong focus. They were so fixated on focused on their hardships that they complained, as if they genuinely didn't know if God would bring them into the Promised Land or not. If they believed He would, there would be no reason to complain because it would be worth any wait - they complained because they genuinely lost sight, a lot like how when we complain about things when others have it worse - we have lost sight and are not being true disciples in our negativity. We also see Aaron and Miriam become jealous of Moses and bitter against his seemingly special calling from God, and their bitterness and selfishness is rejected and disciplined by God - remember that NONE of them OR us were chosen by God because of who we are, but rather because of who He is - don't lose sight of this today in the pursuit of good deeds and success, otherwise you'll become just like Aaron and Miriam here. Also, notice how forgiving Moses was, especially towards someone who had just been hateful towards him? This is true discipleship. We also see that the Lord is ready to give the people the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, but 10 of the 12 spies intentionally spread negative rumors because they fear the people that live there. It would be like "I'm addicted so I'll never get better" intimidating you and convincing you to not even try - in that moment and in all moments where something similar happens, you are acting like 1 of those 10 spies because you are shutting down God's plan and calling for your life (whether the Promised Land, to move out of your addiction, or whatever) because of YOUR OWN fear. He's God, He's not limited by the things that limit us. Don't block His work in your life because of your fears or other reservations (things or ways in which you are holding back from God).

We then see the people rebel against Moses because they are tired of waiting. They want the food and water that they had in Egypt - the problem is, God said not to go back to Egypt earlier (Deuteronomy 17:16), and He stood by it. He was testing them, He didn't want them to be able to take the easy way out, and yet they so desperately wanted to. A perfect example follows: a man breaks the day of Sabbath rest by working. Why couldn't he just keep it Holy? Why can't we? Hasn't God given us all of the days?!? Yet here are, just like these rebellious and whiny people, trying to BE God in our lives and have things our way.

Finally, we see Korah, Dathan and Abiram try to take power from Moses. They didn't like how long God was taking, like we looked at in the example from Exodus, and so they tried to take over as the leaders of the journey to the Promised Land - by force. Hundreds of people joined them (again, both leading for God and following for God are CRUCIAL). But God rejected their cause and made clear that He had chosen Moses and Aaron, and the other rebels made their way to eternal torment - it seems harsh, but when you have such disregard for God's plan that you try to take over the mission and start changing things/doing things differently, like we do with porn and substances and other sins, this is the end result. We will now turn to an example from Deuteronomy.

Day 13: Deuteronomy 32:48-34:12 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: Notice how chapter 34 describes Moses as being buried BY GOD (and nobody knows where the tomb is), and also as the only one who spoke to the Lord face to face? It also made clear that there was no one quite like Moses. Yet, as the portion from chapter 32 showed, because of his negligence, his unwillingness to glorify God in front of the people, even an amazing man of faith

like Moses didn't get to enter the Promised Land. When it comes to Heaven, I don't want the same result, but I fear that a lot of us are in for a surprise. A lot of us, sinning like Moses in our everyday lives, have convinced ourselves that we are religious and saved - but again, even Moses wasn't too special for God's justice. So what do we do? What Moses failed to do: we continue, and we live our everyday lives wholeheartedly for God in all that we do. We must do this, this is true discipleship and even MOSES got it wrong, let alone us. We turn now to an example from Joshua.

Day 14: Joshua 1-3 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." - do not fear OR be dismayed. A lot of people will look at this verse and immediately think "anxiety, don't be afraid" - yes, but that's not the entirety of it. There's more. Don't be dismayed either. Don't be depressed (which is kind of the same thing as dismayed/unhappy because things in your life went a different direction than the one you preferred). Joshua 1:9 says almost the same thing as this verse, telling us, "Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, because the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." So no matter what you go through, don't give way to fear/anxiety or dismay/discouragement/depression, because we know that no matter what we go through God is with us - we ARE going somewhere, God DOES have plans for our lives and plans to give us hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11 word for word). No matter what we go through, even the valley of the shadow of death, we can walk through it, because we know that He walks with us (Psalm 23:4). It's not that things are easy. The reasoning that Isaiah 41:10 gives for us to not fear or be dismayed isn't "because I'll make everything easy" - no it's "for I am your God and will strengthen you." In Joshua 1:9 it's "because the Lord your God goes with you wherever you go." In Psalm 23:4 it's "because He walks with you." So it's not that things are easy - the walk is still hard, there is good reason to face feelings of fear and discouragement, anxiety/depression, but ultimately we don't need an easier walk, we need to lean on God through the difficult walk that we do have. Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Isaiah 41:10: "For I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." - He is your God - He will give you strength when you're not strong enough, and He will uphold you when you feel like you can't make it through anymore. Lean on Him and don't let your feelings control you.

I love chapter 2 of Joshua as well, as it goes to show that even someone like Rahab can do work for the Lord. Rahab was a prostitute, a woman who literally made a living from sin. Also, she didn't grow up an Israelite or even live with them, so she didn't actually know God - maybe you can relate to this, her sin, or both/some sort of combination of that and other things. But God used HER. God had plans for HER. She, like Joshua, took a risk and went against what she knew and was comfortable with/used to. She responded to the calling. This is true discipleship. So answer the call today, whether it means abstaining from lust or something else, or maybe you need to reach out to someone, whatever the case may be.

The instructions that God gave them in chapter 3 seemed dangerous and risky (to try to walk through a flowing Jordan River), but they did it. No questions asked, a lot like the stories with Moses and the long journey earlier - they followed God when it didn't make sense and they had different preferences. And look what happened, as the story goes on - they made it. We are

called to follow God eternally, and I believe that “we make it” (or not) in the daily, in how we live these things out. This, and nothing less, is true discipleship and what following God truly looks like. We now turn to another example from Joshua.

Day 15: Joshua 6-7:13 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: The instructions that God gave them in chapter 6 seemed downright silly (why bother marching around all those times, why not just attack?), but they did it. No questions asked, a lot like the stories with Moses and the long journey earlier - they followed God when it didn't make sense and they had different preferences. And look what happened - they won. We are called to follow God eternally, and I believe that eternal life is won in the daily, in how we live these things out. This, and nothing less, is true discipleship and what following God truly looks like, but we see in chapter 7 that a man named Achan chose to prioritize something else above God. In Joshua 6:18-19, it was made clear to them that they were not to keep any of the plunder, but rather put it to work for the Lord - keep in mind that they had no chance against the nation that they were defeating, and that God was PROVIDING them with a victory. So it's similar for us, when we don't take a Sabbath day - God has GIVEN us all the days, but we don't listen. Achan didn't listen, and notice that it not only cost him but also those around him (keep this in mind in terms of sin and faith). He chose materials, and a lot of us do the same, choosing something else before God, whether materials or sexual pleasures or sitting back when we should move forward in faith, or whatever the case may be. As Joshua 7:13 illustrated, you cannot truly follow God while indulging in the presence of sin - don't be like Achan, making exceptions and ultimately being controlled by sins, but rather hold nothing back and burn it all down if necessary. We now turn to an example from Judges.

Day 16: Judges 2:6-23 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: Here we see that the judges have the opportunity to lead others for God, and the people of Israel have the opportunity to follow for God by following His ways. But as the story goes on, all we get is the same cycle - sin, face consequences (in Judges it was through enemies in war), be afraid and cry out to God, be rescued by God, and then when comfortable return to sin. We all do this, fearful of Hell and then once that fear or guilty feeling goes away, we return to our preferred ways. It shouldn't be like this. This isn't true discipleship. Don't be comfortable and only move or act when it's convenient - be bold and do ALL that God has called us to. This is true discipleship. We now turn to the books of 1-2 Kings to see more examples of what the leaders (judges/kings) and followers (people) did in their journey of following God.

Day 17: 1 Kings 2-7

Day 18: 1 Kings 8-10

Day 19: 1 Kings 11-15

Day 20: 1 Kings 16-20

Day 21: 1 Kings 21-22, 2 Kings 1-3

Day 22: 2 Kings 4-8

Day 23: 2 Kings 9-13

Day 24: 2 Kings 14-17

Day 25: 2 Kings 18-22

Day 26: 2 Kings 23-25 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here many, many examples of good and bad discipleship from these kings and the people of those nations. Again, both leading for God and following for God. I will focus in on the kings - being the King of Jerusalem or Israel, at that point in time, was a way of being a disciple - the kings were called to lead their nation in Godliness. It's a huge responsibility, and we see the kings neglect it and honor it, though mostly neglect and dishonor it. These kings would worship the false gods of the larger nations, or the false gods that were in popular demand among the people - whether through corruption, or through trying to appease others, whatever the sin may have looked like, the books of 1-2 Kings highlight many, many garbage approaches towards true discipleship. Time and time again, these men of God put God last. It's truly sad, and I wanted to encourage you to steer clear. Maybe your temptation is similar to theirs: money, power, popularity, attractive and influential allies but that will pull you away from God and towards spiritually irresponsible things, etc. - and maybe your temptation is different. Whatever the case may be, I wanted to encourage you to follow the example of King Josiah in 2 Kings 22-23 when he found the book of the Law and made extreme reforms in his nation - this would like if you picked up the Bible for the first time in a while and, finding something in the reading, boldly changed EVERYTHING that stands between you and God. This is true discipleship. We now turn to the book of James, written by Jesus's brother.

Day 27: James 1-5 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: There are many texts written by Jesus's followers, including more texts by Peter and John - why didn't I include them? Because I wanted to look not at teachings, but examples. The Gospel of Matthew was a good fit because it showed how Jesus acted. Same thing with Acts showing how the disciples acted. But the writings of Peter, John and James are mostly just preachings - so why did I include James? Because I think there is something special about his story that indicates true discipleship. James was the brother of Jesus. Tough. Your brother is the Savior of the World, and you're just the guy who wrote a 5 chapter book in the Bible? Short end of the stick, but here's your takeaway: maybe that's the point. Jesus didn't JUST do the great, miraculous things that God called Him too - He also died on a cross when asked. Without that, we have no forgiveness for our sins. Jesus had to lose. Sometimes we, in being true disciples, have to lose. Lose porn. Lose putting yourself first. KEEP your purity and your temper and language in check. Lose with a purpose. That's what James did. He could have selfishly mourned the fact that he only wrote a small part of the Bible while His brother is literally GOD IN THE FLESH, but James didn't do that. James did something better. He didn't JUST lose, he lost with a purpose, just like how Jesus didn't die for nothing but for our forgiveness. So what's the purpose of James coming up

short of Jesus? Well, consider the reading - those are 5 of the deepest chapters in the Bible, and they have changed my life. James couldn't be the Messiah, and Jesus needed to be. Sometimes roles are roles, and going up to the cross is a part of true discipleship - James accepted it, took the 5 chapters he DID HAVE, and did the best he could. True discipleship. Just like the story in the Bible (Matthew 25:14-23) where a master lends 3 of his servants some money, and 2 of them return with more money - 1 of those men returned with 10 coins, and the other with only 4, but the master accepted BOTH - this illustrates that God doesn't need you to have a large offering or be really religious - you can be James compared to Jesus, but you just have to grow, like the servant did, and like any true servant of God would. We now turn to a couple of verses to end our plan that will illustrate true discipleship.

Day 28: Proverbs 3:5-6/Luke 9:23 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him and He will make your paths straight." - so we don't know where the path in life is going, and sometimes it's not what we want, but God is making the path straight and leading us, and we are called to follow Him "in all our ways" and trust Him "with all our heart," even when what we see/our own understanding pulls us away from Him - don't lean on you own understanding, lean on God. This is what it looks like to truly follow Him. Luke 9:23: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." - so it's whoever "wants" to be His disciples (by the way, He said this quote TO His disciples, which goes to show that being "saved" is worthless if you're not doing what He said and living for Him "daily"). The operative words here are "wants," "follow me," and "daily." Think about it. THIS is what it looks like to follow Christ and be His disciple. Thanks for reading.