

Discipleship: Growing to Maturity in Christ

HOPE813 FAITH WALK RESOURCES

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." — Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

Introduction

Salvation is a beginning, not a finish line. Scripture never presents conversion as the goal of the Christian life — it presents it as the doorway into a lifelong process of becoming like Christ. Discipleship is that process: intentional, ongoing growth in knowledge, character, and mission, walked out with others rather than alone. HOPE813's mission — restoring hope, rebuilding lives, making disciples — puts discipleship at the center, not the periphery.

Disciples Are Made, Not Born

The Great Commission is a command to "make disciples," not merely to make converts (Matthew 28:19). The early church took this seriously: new believers "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42) — they were taught, not just baptized and left alone. Growth to maturity does not happen automatically after conversion any more than a newborn grows to adulthood without care, feeding, and instruction. Someone, intentionally, has to disciple every believer who matures.

The Marks of a Maturing Disciple

Paul describes the goal of ministry as presenting "every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28) — not sinless, but complete, whole, and mature. Ephesians 4:13 describes this maturity as growing "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," no longer "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Marks of a maturing disciple include:

- Growing hunger for Scripture and sound doctrine
- Increasing fruit of the Spirit in daily conduct
- A settled identity in Christ, less swayed by circumstance or opinion
- Active use of spiritual gifts in service to others
- A growing capacity to disciple someone else

Discipleship Requires Relationship

Jesus disciplined twelve men by living alongside them for three years, not by delivering content from a distance. Paul told Timothy to entrust what he'd learned "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2) — four generations of

discipleship in a single verse. Discipleship is transmitted through relationship, not merely through information. A class can inform; only a relationship can form.

Every Disciple Is Called to Make Disciples

Discipleship is not a task reserved for pastors or staff. The Great Commission was given to the whole church, and every mature believer is meant to eventually pour into someone less mature — a spouse, a child, a friend, a mentee. This is how the Wesleyan movement itself spread: not primarily through large gatherings, but through small class meetings where believers watched over one another's souls and grew together in grace.

Reflection Questions

1. Who has discipled you — intentionally invested in your spiritual growth over time? If no one has, what has that left you missing?
2. Which mark of maturity listed above is growing in your life right now, and which feels stagnant?
3. Is there someone God may be calling you to disciple — even informally?
4. What would it look like for you to move from being discipled to also discipling someone else?

This Week

Identify one person further along than you in faith and ask them to meet with you regularly, even briefly. If you are already further along, identify one person you could begin investing in the same way.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for not leaving us where we started. Continue Your work of maturing us into the likeness of Christ. Give us hunger to grow and courage to invest in others the way someone once invested in us. Raise up disciples who make disciples, for the sake of Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.