

INTRODUCTION: DISCIPLESHIP STUDY GUIDE

The Church Growth and Discipleship Training Institute

What is The Church Growth and Discipleship Institute Study Guide?

The Study Guide is designed to train new and long-standing believers to know who they are in Christ, to understand the power of their prayers, and learn how to become more like the Jesus who walked as a human in the world He created and loved so much that He left His eternal place with the Heavenly Father to show His Love for the world.

The Institute aims to prepare new believers and those in Christ to witness their lifestyle. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said, ***“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*** Love is the foundation for all we do in Christ. Love is not a feeling but what we do to show the love we profess. Love is an action work. Professing love without the acts of love is empty and without the power to change hearts. Reading *1 Corinthians 13*, we will see The Love of God in believers as they change the worlds within which they live.

The Discipleship Institute aims to provide a consistent and biblically focused process for the personal growth of new believers and for mature believers desiring to instruct immature saints. The further goal is to provide a measure for learners to gauge their development. The five modules are constructed to train the learner to be witnesses in the church and anywhere they encounter believers and nonbelievers representing The Master by living a loving and holy lifestyle. The Apostle Paul wrote in *Ephesians 4:1-4*, ***“...Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.”***

The Apostle Peter says in *1 Peter 2:5,6* that we are ***“...Living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*** Again, in *Revelations 1:5,6*, ***“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*** And yet again, in *Revelations 5:10*, ***“And have made us kings and priests to our God...And we shall reign on the earth.”*** We go from who we are in Christ to understanding the love of God, being more like the Jesus of the Gospels, getting along with our brethren, and finally winning souls and disciplining new believers.

The learning process

The study guide follows the process of first discovering who we are in Christ (1 Peter 2:5,9), followed by an understanding of the love of God and how He prepares the disciples to do His Will. Each module is a study guide written to deepen the understanding of the associated books. The goal, therefore, is to learn and practice the concepts outlined in each book, which are directly taken from the Bible.

The five learning levels and levels developed from the associated books are as follows:

LESSON 1 THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST:

‘Prayer and The Royal Priesthood’ by Dr. Robert E. Dotson

LESSON 2 THE NEW COMMANDMENTS OF LOVE:

‘The God-kind of Love Is Tough’ by Dr. Robert E. Dotson

LESSON 3: THE BELIEVER'S LIFESTYLE:

‘Only To Be More Like Jesus’ by Dr. Robert E. Dotson

LESSON 4 MANUAL FOR DISCIPLINE BELIEVERS:

‘These Are They Which Testify’ by Dr. Robert E. Dotson

The Discipleship Learners’ Institute is their salvation by The Blood of Jesus Christ, Him crucified, buried, and resurrected from the dead on the third day.

Believers in Christ are Abraham’s seed; in Christ, we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (*Galatians 3:28*)...” **and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together”** (*Romans 8:17*).

Each module establishes a revelation to the learner critical to the disciple’s growth in The Kingdom of Heaven. In effect, the training is a calibration of the power of the Holy Ghost born into every believer. Salvation is the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary. *John 3:16* is why believers are saved, and only through the Love of God and His Gift of His Only Begotten Son are we in Christ. All that we are and all that we become in the Kingdom is a function of the redemptive work of Jesus.

Jesus died for the sins of the world. Jesus said (*John 16:8 and 13*), The Holy Spirit has come, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Jesus. The Spirit will guide you into all truth, for The Spirit will not speak on His authority, but whatever He hears, He will say and tell you things to come. He will glorify Jesus, for He will take of what is Christ’s and declare it to believers. That promise is to His disciples first and from them to all disciples (*John 17*).

Jesus said in *Acts 1:8*, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** All we must do is submit to Christ's commandments and love one another (*John 22:37-40*). The *God Kind of Love* is the

most potent force in the universe. The Word of God reveals His Mind to believers; we are His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). When He calls us witnesses, it means much more than our testimony but what we lay down for His glory, our lives (1 Peter 2:24).

First, we have to know who we are in Christ. In the process of being disciples, understanding the believers' priesthood in the Kingdom is required to do the work of the mission of Jesus. Believers are made royal priests (1 Peter 2,5 and 9,10) because we are..." **living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...**" **a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**" This is the legacy our Master leaves us; what we do is a function of who we have become.

Lesson 1: THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

Because of His legacy to all believers in Christ, we are given a tool more powerful than any weapon Satan can use against The Kingdom of God: PRAYER! As James Montgomery penned, "*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, unuttered or expressed, the motion of a hidden fire, that trembles in the breast.*" Prayer is the most important ministry of Christ throughout His earthly ministry. Prayer's power was so evident to His disciples that they asked Him to teach them how to pray. The last high priest, John the Baptizer, led them to pray so they knew its power. *Why don't more Christians today recognize the incredible power of prayer?*

What is prayer? How is it possible that many believers have yet to learn what prayer is? I am convinced that if believers understood prayer, the Kingdom of God would experience unbelievable power in the world around us. Indeed, if asked, most believers would say prayer is direct communication with God, and that, of course, is correct. Prayer is much more than communicating with The Almighty. In *John 17:15-21*, Jesus defines prayer in a more personal way. "***I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into it. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.***"

The words of our Christ in *John 17* give me chills. We communicate with Him through the indwelling of The Holy Ghost and are one with Him. When I pray in tongues, I pray in a cryptic language that only God can respond to; amazing! (2 Corinthians 14:14). I can only mess my prayer up sometimes. And even better, I talk to God about the exact issue needed to get His desired answer. How can any believer not recognize the power of our prayer?

The words of Christ in *John 17* describe the concept of Perichoresis. Professor Ian A. McFarland Candler School of Theology writes in the *Scottish Journal of*

Theology, describing Perichoresis (perichoresis, circumincessio) as "a *theological term which describes the 'necessary being-in-one-another or circumincession of the three divine Persons of the Trinity because of the single divine essence, the eternal procession of the Son from the Father and of the Spirit from the Father and (through) the Son, and the fact that the three Persons are distinguished solely by the relations of opposition between them.'*" When the writer of Hebrews says in *Hebrews 4:16*, "**Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,**" it describes the unfettered access that we have to the throne of God. That is the power of our prayers.

Lesson 2: THE NEW COMMANDMENTS OF LOVE

Much of what we think about our relationship with God is expressed by the works we do to the glory of The Almighty. From James, we know the importance of our lifestyle in Christ, but our works do not measure our relationship. *James 2:14* reads, "**What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**" But *James 2:17* reads, "**Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works, is dead.**"

What does it mean, and where is the power in our religion? When questioned about the commandments, Jesus answered in *Matthew 22:37-40* that the ten commandments are combined in just two: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and **mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**" But the sum of the matter from *1 Corinthians 13:13*, "**And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**"

God's Love is tough. But God's kind of love is nothing like what we call love. Several words describe love in the Scriptures, but rather than exegete those other words, it would better serve to understand the depth of God's love for all humanity. The Greek word for God's perfect love is Agape, and that love is unconditional. Unconditional love is impossible for anyone to accomplish in the human condition. *Romans 3:10,23-25* says, "**There is none righteous, no, not one...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.**" In short, it is impossible for anyone to love God in any way. It is only by the power of the Holy Ghost that any believer can love unconditionally.

God tests us with His Love. Loving His way requires faith. For the unsaved, unconditional love is impossible under any circumstances. When we place all our faith and hope in Christ's redemptive work, we believe His Blood cleanses us from all sin. *2 Corinthians 5:17* says, "...**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**" Only by dying in the flesh can we hope to live without sin. God doesn't use anyone He hasn't tested. It is by faith

we are saved (*Ephesians 2:8, 9*). *Romans 6:4* says, “...**We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**”

Lesson 3: BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS, THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Jesus is Lord! *Philippians 2:5-11* says, “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”

How is there doubt about who Jesus is and His relationship with The Heavenly Father? *Hebrews 4:15*, “**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” Not only is Jesus the sinless Son of God, but as the incarnate Messiah and the Savior of the world, we cannot be like Him in His sinless nature and perfection in the Will and Works of The Father. But He left His legacy, penned by His disciples both during His earthly ministry and after the resurrection and coming of the Holy Ghost. His life and works are a testimony that we can emulate. In my book, ‘*Only To Be More Like Jesus*,’ I identify seven ways from the Gospels that believers can be more like Jesus (*The seven Be’s*). The Master was **SERIOUS** about His obedience to The Father, **LOVING** how He treated everyone, **ANGRY** about the world's sin and the religious leaders' hypocrisy. He was always **PRAYERFUL**, always seeking the Will of The Father. The Master was a **PLAIN** man in His lifestyle, never pretentious. He was the most **HUMBLE** and truthful man ever lived because He became a servant where pride had no place. Jesus was **REAL**, speaking only what pleased His Father and without fear on His way to the cross.

Lesson 4: A MANUAL FOR DISCIPLING BELIEVERS

Discipleship is the final step in growing believers from salvation to maturity in Christ. Jesus said in *John 5:39*, “**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**” Without question, the Bible is a testament to Jesus, first as the promise of the coming Messiah to the incarnation of The Son of God. Jesus said in *Acts 1:8*, “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

The goal of the Kingdom of God is to be a witness of Christ on earth. In *John 17*, Jesus prays God protect believers as they are in the world but have become occupiers of the world. The purpose of the Kingdom of God is to represent Him in the world Jesus loved so much, He came into the world and bore its sin by crucifixion at

Calvary. The book is a manual teaching three principles of discipleship: first, to know The Mind of God; second, to win souls for Jesus; and third, to disciple believers in Christ.

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I developed the discipleship process over thirty years of ministry as God called me to train believers in preparation to carry His gospel to the world around them. I don't claim any new revelation for developing believers but another way to accomplish the discipleship goal. The five books I have written are the product of my work in several church congregations where I served in support of pastors with the same goal of disciplining the children of God to win souls, to teach through the fellowship of the saints, to learn the principles of discipleship and become witnesses of the King of kings and Lord of lords.