

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 5: THE FRIENDS AND DISCIPLES OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled *Who is Jesus?* This series of seven lessons introduces the person and work of Jesus from a Christian perspective, considering His identity, work, teachings and death. Because Jesus is central to the Christian faith and religion, it is vital for the disciple to know Jesus, and for those exploring Christianity to know what makes Jesus Christ unique, and worthy of our discipleship and devotion.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 5: THE FRIENDS AND DISCIPLES OF JESUS

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson looks at what we can learn about Jesus from the relationships He held during His time on earth.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

When Jesus left the earth, there remained a group of ordinary people who had encountered the extraordinary God in human form. On their own, they were not able to start a spiritual movement that would grow until it reached every corner of the earth – but with the Holy Spirit they could accomplish amazing things! Jesus spent His time investing in and discipling individual people. The early church was made up of ordinary men and women, sinners, children, and outcasts from society. This shows us we do not need wealth or power to impress God, but rather true faith. It also teaches us that we should not feel superior to other people, and that salvation is offered to everyone. Jesus viewed women and children as important as men. Our churches today should follow Jesus' example.

GETTING STARTED

1. Why did Jesus extend a personal invitation to people to “follow Him” and be His disciple? Why did Jesus want people around Him as He taught and worked miracles?

2. If you were in the disciples' place and Jesus invited you to leave your job, your home, and all you knew to follow Him, what would be the most difficult thing to leave behind?



STUDY

❖ **JESUS: REVOLUTION THROUGH RELATIONSHIP:** When Jesus came to begin His Kingdom, He did not do so with a military campaign, a political rally, or by seizing power in any traditional sense. Rather, He built relationships with imperfect people and changed individual lives, just as God continues to do today.

- Jesus didn't seek out the rich, powerful or others in high society to build His Kingdom and spread the Gospel message. On the contrary He overwhelmingly used imperfect people who were willing to follow Him by faith.
- The ordinary people God used gave glory to Him for any good works they did. It would have been normal for the wise and powerful people to take credit for themselves. Instead, all that was accomplished was a work of God (Acts 4:13).

❖ **ORDINARY PEOPLE LOVED JESUS:** Those who flocked to Jesus to hear Him teach were ordinary people from all walks of life. Jesus especially welcomed those who were rejected by society.

- **Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecy to proclaim Good News to the Poor:** Jesus came to the poor and shared with them the good news of salvation, eternal life, and the promise of treasure in heaven. People can be 'poor' in many ways, including financial, social and spiritual poverty. Read the verses and write down what Jesus said about the poor:

Mark 12:41-44	
Luke 6:20	
Luke 5:12-14	

- **Jesus welcomed Children:** Jesus did not place a low value on children, but rather He welcomed them and emphasized their significance. This would have been very different from the cultural perception of children in Jesus' day. Read the verses below and write down how Jesus responded to children:

Matthew 11:25-26	
Matthew 18:1-4	
Luke 18:15-17	



- o Children understood Jesus and accepted His message by faith. They loved being with Him, and since children are often honest about how they feel, it would seem it was a delight for them to be near Him.
 - o Jesus taught that we must become humble like children.
 - o Children worshipped Jesus, whereas wise leaders (wise in their own eyes) scoffed at Him (Matthew 21:15-16).
- **Jesus, friend of Sinners:** Jesus was accused of being a friend of tax-collectors and sinners. While Jesus never approved of their sin, He ate with sinners, spoke with them, and acted kindly towards them. This angered the religious officials of the day. Jesus did not condemn people or punish them, rather He loved them, befriended them and invited them to repent and believe.
- How did Jesus respond to the woman who was caught in adultery? (Read John 8:1-11)

- How did Jesus respond when Zacchaeus, a tax-collector (who often collected more money from people than he should have), sought out Jesus? What was the result of their interaction? (Read Luke 19:1-10)

❖ **ORDINARY DISCIPLES FOLLOWED JESUS:** In the time of Jesus, it was common for disciples – or followers – to accompany a great teacher as he taught from town to town. These disciples would take work, where they could get it, to support the work of the teacher. They also assisted Him by teaching others themselves. The disciples show us that God uses ordinary people who have faith in Him to accomplish great things for His Kingdom:

- **Calling of the Disciples:** Jesus chose twelve specific people to follow Him. The Bible gives us accounts of several different disciples being called (Matthew 10:1-4, Matthew 9:9, John 1:43-46). Read the account of Simon Peter in Luke 5:1-11 – how was he invited to follow Jesus? What was his response?



- **Training and Sending of the Disciples:** Jesus focused His training and His teaching on 12 men (although other disciples, including women, were often around Him). Jesus trained them and prepared them to present the good news of salvation to others.
 - Jesus taught His Disciples His message so they could share it with others.
 - Jesus kept His Disciples close to Him so they could see and believe.
 - The Disciples did as Jesus directed them.
- After teaching His disciples, Jesus sent them out to teach others. How did Jesus send them out? Read [Luke 10:1-9](#) and write down what you learn.

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- **Ordinary People:** Even though they spent all their time with Jesus, the disciples were still ordinary people who struggled. They were not perfect followers, but they recognized their sin and the ability of Jesus to meet their every need. Read the following accounts of the disciples. How did they behave?

Matthew 28:16-18	
John 18:15-18, 25-27	
Matthew 26:36-45	

Even though Jesus had told them He would die and rise again, some doubted even after they saw His resurrected body. The Disciples experienced fear and doubt, and Simon Peter even denied knowing Him.

- What does this tell us about God’s ability to use us? Must we already be perfect to be a disciple of Jesus?

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❖ **GOD USES THE ORDINARY TO ACCOMPLISH THE EXTRAORDINARY:** Jesus demonstrated tremendous love in His dealings with all people while on earth. He was harsh with those who



oppressed and took advantage of people, but kind to those who recognized their sin and were willing to repent. Jesus taught these simple Disciples – some who had no schooling or training – to teach others about the Kingdom of God.

- **Jesus commissioned them to make disciples:** Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God would grow one person at a time, and taught the disciples to teach others and make more disciples (Matthew 28:19). Because of these men, the message of Jesus has been taken to every corner of the earth through new, faithful disciples!
 - **Disciples followed Jesus to death:** Even in their imperfect state, Jesus' disciples followed Jesus' teachings even to their deaths. In defence of the true Gospel, they counted it a privilege to die as Jesus had died, and they faced their sentences with extraordinary courage.
 - **Jesus gave them Power:** The disciples were told to perform miracles and they did many great things in Jesus' name, proving that His message was true (Acts 1:8).
 - **Jesus Grew their Numbers:** More and more people joined the spiritual movement of following Jesus (Acts 2:46-47, Acts 6:7).
- ❖ **Jesus Loves You:** Jesus never caused people to fear Him, but rather evoked love and devotion. Jesus saw them as they were, and loved them anyway. As these ordinary people relied on the power of God within them, they could accomplish many things. Each of us can be a friend and disciple of Jesus Christ, and join His mission in taking the Good News of forgiveness to every person on earth. Jesus loves us, and wants to use us right where we are to join this adventure with Him! How will you respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him?



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Jesus came to bring His Kingdom not with a military campaign, a political rally, or by seizing power in any traditional sense. He built relationships with imperfect people and changed individual lives.
- ❖ Those who flocked to Jesus to hear Him teach were ordinary people from all walks of life.
- ❖ Jesus came to the poor and shared with them the good news of salvation, eternal life, and the promise of treasure in heaven.
- ❖ Jesus did not place a low value on children, but rather welcomed them and emphasized their significance.
- ❖ Jesus was accused of being a friend of tax-collectors and sinners. While Jesus never approved of their sin, He ate with sinners, spoke with them, and acted kindly towards them.
- ❖ Jesus told His disciples “Follow Me”, and He expected them to leave their ordinary lives and join Him in His mission.
- ❖ Jesus trained His disciples to go and spread the Gospel and share the good news of the Kingdom of God.
- ❖ Jesus used ordinary people to accomplish the extraordinary – Jesus can even use us!



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Christianity is the spiritual movement of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. How has Christianity spread around the world? Where can it be found where you live, and how is it spreading?

2. Why is Jesus' way of leading people in love so different from most leaders today (especially military or political leaders)?

3. Do you see that Jesus loves you, even in your ordinary state? What will you do with Jesus' invitation to come and follow Him?