

**GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)**  
**SCHOOL OF MINISTRY**  
**ARUSHA - TANZANIA**

**SUBJECT:    EVANGELISM & CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

**LESSON 3:   DISCIPLESHIP**

**COURSE TEACHER:        BISHOP EKONG**

**Introduction:** - Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 14:25-33; 6:43-49

A disciple simply means a learner, a student or one who follows both the teacher and his teachings. This term is mostly used with reference to believers in Christ, both those who believed during His life on earth, and those who later joined the Early Church.

The term 'disciple' was first used in the New Testament and mostly in the Gospels and in Acts of the Apostles. It was not applied to the disciples of Christ only but also to those of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:1-4; Mark 2:18), Moses (John 9:27-29), Pharisees (Mark 2:18), etc.

The 12 Apostles of Christ were mostly known as the 12 disciples, but Christ had more than 12 when He walked the surface of the earth (Acts 1:15; 1Corinthians 15:3-8). It was from this large number of disciples that He chose 12 to be His inner circle whom He named as Apostles (Luke 6:12-17).

Discipleship is not limited to new or young believers, as is the practice in many churches today but extends to every believer in Christ whether young, old, new, or mature. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, every believer is referred to as a disciple of Christ (Acts 1:15; 6:1-7; 9:1-2, 10, 25-26). It was at the church in Antioch that believers were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:25-26). To be called a 'Christian' in those days was intended to be disrespectful or in contempt of the disciples. It was derogatory and spiteful and not necessarily a good thing to be called a 'Christian'. However, among believers, they always refer to themselves as being disciples rather than Christians (Acts 16:1; 19:1-10).

**The cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33; Matthew 16:24-27)**

Discipleship does not start and end with just believing and receiving Jesus Christ into your life as your personal Lord and Saviour. It is a life-long commitment to faith in Him, to be more like Him in character and service. The Great Commission was a command to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all the teachings and commands of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Unfortunately, emphasis and focus in many churches today has shifted from discipleship to church membership. Salvation is for all (Luke 14:16-24) but discipleship is for those willing to commit (Luke 14:26-33). Church membership will not lead to eternal life but discipleship will. Church membership remains with church register, which will perish in fire but discipleship has an eternal record in the Book of Life.

The early disciples of Christ were always with Christ, learning by observing, hearing and following His examples, actions and teachings (John 13:12-17; 1Peter 2:21-25). Christ

was their model for living the life of God. The same applies to us today (Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 12:1-4; 2Corinthians 3:17-18).

The Lord shared a great deal of confident information with His early disciples, teaching them things that others outside of the circle were unaware of (Matthew 16:20-21; 24:1-3; Mark 4:33-34). This shows that true disciples will receive deep revelations of the heart and purposes of God and will seek to obey and to promote it (Luke 6:40; 1Corinthians 2:9-12; Romans 8:14-17).

### **A) Matthew 16:24-27**

Discipleship requires a commitment and a willingness to die, if need be, for what you believe.

In Matthew 16:24-27, Jesus Christ explains to His disciples what it means to be a disciple. To lose your life is to find it; to die is to live. To deny oneself is not to assume some false, external and rigorous self denial of pleasures, but to put the interests of the kingdom first and foremost in one's life.

To take up the cross does not mean to endure some irritating burden, but to denounce or crucify self-centred ambitions and passions. Such sacrifice results in eternal life and the fullest experience of kingdom life now (Mark 10:28-30).

### **B) Luke 14:25-33**

In this passage, Jesus Christ made some difficult statements, which many people have wrongly given all kinds of interpretations.

In verse 26, what He meant was that to be His disciple, all earthly relationships must take second place behind loyalty to Him. It does not imply that we hate our family members or bear them any ill will but chose Christ over all others.

In verse 27, what this means is that a disciple must die to self-centredness and be willing to endure suffering or even martyrdom for His sake (John 15:18-20; 1Peter 3:13-18; 4:1, 12-19; 2Timothy 3:12).

Verses 28-32 illustrate the fact that erecting a building is costly and waging war is dangerous. Therefore, a disciple of Christ must count the cost first and understand too that it takes a lot of sacrifice and commitment to be a disciple. It is not a casual type of identification with Christ.

Verse 33 simply summarises what it means to be a disciple. It demands renouncing totally all selfish interests for the sake of Christ. It demands total commitment and realisation of Christ's purpose for our lives.

### **The marks of a true disciple**

To follow Christ and be His disciple requires:

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16)
2. Self denial of sinful passions (Matthew 16:24-26)
3. Willingness to sacrifice and to suffer for Him (carrying your cross)
4. Sincere love for one another (John 13:34-35)
5. Bearing fruits for God (John 15:8)