

Exploring Biblical Leadership
Christ and His Disciples—A Bible Study
by Captain Bryan Groves and Major Jay Nelson

Christ's last command before leaving earth was to "go and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19–20). It is important to note that Christ's command was not to make "believers." Making believers is merely the first step in obeying His directive. Making disciples is a much longer process which requires vision, commitment, availability, and time.

Chris Adsit acknowledges this in his definition of a disciple: "A disciple is a person in progress, eager to learn and apply the truths that Jesus Christ teaches him, resulting in ever-deepening commitments to Christ and to a Christ-like lifestyle. (Thus,) disciples demonstrate a Christ-like attitude and are characterized by Christ-like actions" —"Personal Disciple Making Seminar," 1999, Disciplemakers International.

Just what are these Christ-like attitudes and actions? Stated another way, "What does a disciple look like?" and "How do we get there from here?" Wanting to address these questions led us to explore the Scriptures to develop a list of attributes that should distinguish us as disciples. We did this because we recognize that the foundation for being an effective Christian leader—and that should be the desire of each OCF member—starts with being a godly follower of Christ. Secondly, as leaders, we also wanted to purposefully pass these traits on to other Christians.

We realize that the Christian life is much like Steven Curtis Chapman's song, "The Great Adventure"; it is a journey, not a destination. Each of us as Christians should be moving forward in our faith in order to glorify God and bring others to Him. We believe the best way to do this is to spend time with the Lord. In Mark 3:13–14, the Bible tells us that Jesus chose His disciples and called them to be with Him. In Acts 4:13, the Pharisees noted that Paul and John were ordinary, unschooled men, but that they had spent time with Jesus. It is our belief that Christ gathered the disciples to spend time with Him so that they might see the traits that marked His life and learn to demonstrate them in their own lives. We further believe that Jesus wanted His disciples then, as well as today, to emulate that process of passing on His virtues. By so doing, God develops a growing number of living "letters of recommendation" (2 Cor. 3:1–3).

At the end of the article is an open-ended list of attributes Jesus and the disciples demonstrated and passed on as part of their legacy as they purposefully invested in the lives of others. These spiritual characteristics are part of what Paul exhorted Timothy to pass on to other reliable men who would also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). As such, they are also traits that should identify us as Christians—"Little Christs." We encourage you to pray over and study the attributes listed, possibly exploring one skill and its biblical basis each day.

As we increasingly live out these skills—moving from mere mental knowledge to practical application of them in our daily lives—they will begin to define us. Additionally, we will move from elementary matters (Heb. 6:1–3) to maturity in our faith and in our relationships. Jesus changed the world primarily through godly relationships with a small group of men. It is our desire that we will consistently model these Christ-like virtues in our own lives. As we and other OCF members do this in increasing measure, God will use us to accomplish the mission He has given OCF: *Christian officers exercising biblical leadership to raise up a godly military.*

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Christian leaders have accepted Christ as Savior and intentionally surrender to Him as Lord.

John 1:12 and 3:3,16 (becoming children of God—spiritual birth—God’s gift: His Son)
Romans 10:9–10 (belief and confession)
James 4:7–8 (submit to God)
Revelation 3:20 (opening the door to Christ)

Christian leaders are distinguished by certain qualifications.

1 Timothy 3:1–7
Titus 1:6–9

Christian leaders are grounded in the Bible and believe it is the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (origin and usefulness of Scripture)
Hebrews 4:12 (Word of God is living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword)
Ephesians 6:17 (Word of God is our sword in the armor of God)

Christian leaders apply their knowledge and practice obedience.

James 1:22 (be doers and not only hearers of the Word)
John 14:21 (the one who loves God will obey Him)
2 Corinthians 10:5 (honor God in one’s thoughts)

Christian leaders exercise faith.

They move beyond intellectual belief to dependency on God.
Hebrews 11:1, 6 (definition of faith and its necessity to please God)
2 Corinthians 4:18 and 5:7 (walk by faith, not by sight)
Matthew 8:5–13 (the faith of the Roman Centurion)
Proverbs 3:5–6 (trust in the Lord with all your heart)

Christian leaders communicate with God.

Matthew 6:9–13 (the Lord’s Prayer)
Mark 11:24, James 1:5–8 (pray with confidence)
1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, Philippians 4:6–7 (pray without ceasing and with thanksgiving)
2 Corinthians 4:16–18, Romans 8:28 (interpret circumstances through an eternal lens)
James 4:2 (pray specifically)
Ephesians 6:18 (pray for all the saints)

Christian leaders are faithful stewards and exercise their spiritual gifts.

Matthew 25:14–30 (parable of the talents)
Luke 12:48 (to whom much is given, much will be demanded)
1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10 (use one’s gifts to serve others for the common good)
Malachi 3:8–10 (robbing God of tithes & offerings)

Christian leaders accept responsibilities as a leader and servant.

They are available, humble, and willing to be used by God for His Glory.

Isaiah 6:8 (whom shall we send, and who will go for us?)
Mark 10:43–45 (Christ’s definition of greatness-service)
Philippians 2:3–17 (Christ-like humility)

Christian leaders are relationally oriented.

They are approachable, consistent, and considerate.

They demonstrate and articulate the value and relevance of God's Word to our lives.

Mark 1:14–18 (calling of the first disciples)

John 4:4–26 (Jesus and the woman at the well)

Ephesians 4:15, 29 (speaking the truth in love, being edifying in our speech)

Christian leaders regularly fellowship and worship with other believers.

Hebrews 10:24–25 (meeting and encouragement)

Proverbs 27:17 (iron sharpens iron)

Galatians 6:2 (bear each others' burdens)

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (two are better than one—a cord of three strands)

Christian leaders possess a heart for evangelism and a vision for disciple-making.

Matthew 28:16–20 (the Great Commission)

1 Peter 3:15 (always be prepared to answer others)

2 Timothy 2:2 (train the trainer)

Christian leaders are consistent in walking with the Lord and applying His principles.

Hebrews 5:14 (constant use of the Word enables us to distinguish good from evil)

Romans 12:1–2 (not conforming to the world and distinguishing what God's will is)

Galatians 5:22–26, 2 Peter 1:5–9 (fruit of the Spirit/attributes of effective Christians)

Christian leaders are committed to continual growth in their new life in Christ.

Galatians 2:20–21 (new life in Christ)

1 Timothy 4:8 (importance of spiritual training)

Hebrews 5:11–6:3 (moving beyond elementary spiritual teachings)

2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Peter 1:6–7 (sanctification is a process)

Christian leaders love others.

1 Corinthians 13:1–8 (importance and attributes of love)

1 Peter 4:8 (love covers over a multitude of sins)