

WALK WITH ME

A BIBLICAL JOURNEY IN MAKING CHRISTLIKE DISCIPLES.

HAL PERKINS



BEACON HILL PRESS
OF KANSAS CITY

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Preface | 9 |
| 1. How Did Jesus Walk? | 13 |
| 2. History's Most Empowering Relationship | 24 |
| 3. Making the Most with Less | 36 |
| 4. Is Making Disciples Optional? | 48 |
| 5. Step One for Everyone | 61 |
| 6. Learning from Jesus | 76 |
| 7. Obeying from the Heart | 90 |
| 8. Thinking with Jesus | 102 |
| 9. Walking with Jesus | 117 |
| 10. Serving like Jesus | 130 |
| 11. Holy like Jesus | 144 |
| 12. Making Christlike Disciples | 162 |
| 13. Making Christlike Disciplemakers | 174 |
| Notes | 187 |
| Resources | 191 |

PREFACE

The ambitious aim of this book is to multiply Christlike disciplemakers. The realistic aim is to increase Christ-honoring conversations, commitments, and accountability to encourage modest progress in becoming more like Christ. The closer we are to what Christ was in love and practice, the more effectively He can work through us to build His Church (see Matt. 16:18; Heb. 12:14).

Many speak of discipleship. Usually they are speaking of only some—but not all—of the following five categories:

1. *Being disciplined*—being personally disciplined by God’s Word, Spirit, and other Christians. We all need this help until our dying day (chaps. 1–2).
2. *Discipling others informally*—being Christlike wherever we are, including intentionally influencing non-Christians (chap. 5).
3. *Discipling other Christians toward maturity*—intentionally and strategically influencing Christians to know and follow Jesus (chaps. 6–11).
4. *Discipling maturing Christians to disciple (mentor) others* (chaps. 3, 4, 12).
5. *Discipling maturing Christian disciplers to intentionally help others in making Christlike disciples* (chap. 13).

Components 4 and 5 are the most challenging items in this list and are often omitted. Yet they are absolutely necessary to fulfill the Great Commission by multiplying leaders as Jesus intends.

In strategically making Christlike disciples, this book follows the steps outlined in Matt. 28:19-20:

Go, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Christlikeness everywhere (chap. 5).

Teaching—inviting others to willfully come under Jesus' influence (chap. 6).

To obey—helping those who respond to seek, trust, and serve Jesus (chaps. 7—10).

Everything—helping continuing responders with heart and life holiness (chap. 11), making Christlike disciples (chaps. 3, 4, 12), and making Christlike disciplemakers (chap. 13).

Jesus said His Father is always at work, and He, too, is working (John 5:17). We can be sure that Jesus is at work this very moment. But in many places where Christianity is culturally embraced, something—or someone—is not working as it should. Are the workers Jesus told His disciples to pray for (see Matt. 9:38) working too much at the things they *think* will work and not working enough at what Jesus *knows* will work?

For Christlike disciplemaking to multiply, we must establish significant intercessory prayer: “Holy Spirit, we desperately need Your help for us to ‘be and do church’ in very lost cultures—Your way. Please soften and enlighten our entrenched values, perspectives, and priorities.”

We also must authentically model Christlikeness, including graciously helping others discover and follow Jesus. We must sensitively discover if others understand what it means to walk with Jesus. And then we must adopt, encourage, and help those who are interested in actually walking with Him.

I write not only as a lover of what Jesus loved and died for—His Church—but also as a grateful lover of my own denomination. My denomination's particular emphasis has led me to look

long and hard at how it is we are to be holy—loving God entirely and becoming Christlike.

To protect identities, names in some stories have been changed. Some of the stories and concepts are fleshed out in much greater detail in my recently printed book, *If Jesus Were a Parent*.¹ That book is designed to help parents disciple their families. Because the family is the basic structure for close and lengthy relationships, and because close and lengthy relationships are needed to make disciples, well-disciplined Christlike parents are our best hope for multiplying Christlike disciples.

1 --- HOW DID JESUS WALK?

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did (*1 John 2:6*).

Jesus said, “Follow me.” First John 2:6 says that those claiming to live in Christ must walk as He walked. This book is about making Christlike disciples—getting and giving the help needed to walk the way Jesus walked. As we begin, may this prayer be on our lips: “Lord Jesus, please help us to know, love, and follow You better and to realize how much we need each other’s help to become and make Christlike disciples.”

What is a disciple?

Long ago a “maestro” or “master” would look for a student in whom to reproduce his expertise. To be selected, this student must demonstrate great potential. The master would then invite this student into an apprenticeship for a significant length of time. Through the influence of this relationship, the apprentice—or disciple—could watch, learn, be coached, and eventually duplicate the skills of the master.

But that was not all. The intent of the close and lengthy relationship was for the apprentice to absorb the passions, dreams, and secrets of the master. And the master continually observed the apprentice, always watching, always listening, to discover how well the apprentice was obtaining these things.

In this sense, we are all apprentices, disciples who live in close and lengthy relationships, being influenced by other people or things, for better and for worse. Family, school, coworkers, and the media have profoundly disciplined us all. The issue is not *whether* anyone or anything is discipling us, but *who* or *what* is discipling us. Nor is the question, “Should I have a disciple?” The fact is, we *are* influencing—and thus discipling—others. The real issue is *how* we are discipling them.

To make Christlike disciples, we must be disciples— not of our culture—but of Christ

Fact: all of us *have been* disciplined—profoundly influenced by someone or something—intentionally and unintentionally, formally and informally.

Fact: all of us *are being* disciplined right now by every thought, word, sight, experience, and relationship that influences us.

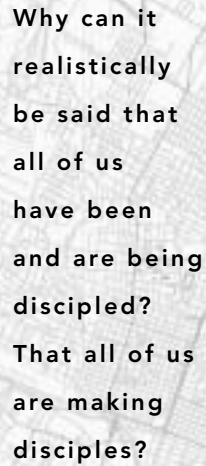
Fact: all of us *are making* disciples—influencing others based on precisely who and what we are—to varying degrees.

But God, through His Spirit, is also influencing every Christian and every lost person (see John 16:7-15). His gracious truth comes to us all, whether or not we believe in Christ, as an encouraging or convicting influence (see Rom. 8:9; John 16:7-15). The battle for the heart of every person’s eternal destiny boils down to influence and how he or she responds to that influence.

We cannot help being disciplined—influenced—by all that surrounds us. However, we can intentionally and proactively seek to know and follow a mentor, a coach, a good father or mother.

To purposely attach ourselves to someone in order to follow him or her is the essence of *intentionally* being disciplined.

Even Jesus was influenced. He purposefully and proactively attached himself to His Father (see Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 21:37; 22:39, 41). In intriguing ways, His relationship with His Father is like that of a disciple with a mentor. It's a helpful model for us to better understand what it means to become and make Christlike disciples.



Why can it realistically be said that all of us have been and are being disciplined? That all of us are making disciples?

What is a disciple of Jesus?

A disciple of Jesus knows and follows Him. He or she walks *with* Jesus for a lifetime.

- “Come to me” (Matt. 11:28).
- “Follow me” (Matt. 16:24).
- “This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:5-6).

Disciples of Jesus increasingly walk *as* Jesus walked.

What do Jesus' disciples learn as they watch and listen to Jesus?

First, they come to realize the intentionality and impact of Jesus' relationship with His Father.

First John 2:3-6 affirms that every Christian is to walk as Jesus walked. So how did Jesus walk? As we will soon discover, Jesus walked in a close, sensitive relationship with His Father.

Jesus says to us, “Follow me.” So following Jesus, walking as He walked, begins by walking in a close, sensitive relationship with our eternal Father.

Further, when Jesus made disciples, He did not organize a

seminar or teach through a systematic curriculum. He invited twelve young men to walk with Him. They spent much time with Him—in a close and lengthy relationship. They walked, served, and ate together. They *dialogued* many times with Him about what mattered most:

- Jesus' Father
- Jesus himself
- The kingdom of God
- Jesus' disciples, their understanding of the issues and their response to them

Why do you think Jesus gave so much of himself to just a few called His disciples? When He directed His disciples to make disciples, what do you think they imagined themselves doing to make disciples?

Finally, when Jesus directed His disciples to make disciples (Matt. 28:16-20), they automatically assumed He was calling them to do with others what He had done with them. They were to say to a few, “Walk with me”; that is, bring others into a close and lengthy relationship—walking, serving, eating—all the while dialoguing with them about what matters most. It never entered their minds that making disciples might mean teaching a seminar or studying through a curriculum, good and valuable as seminars and curricula are. (We must provide emerging leaders with a biblical track to run on, while not omitting long-term relational coaching.)

Based on their experience with Him, Jesus' disciples could only conclude that His commission to make disciples (see Matt. 28:18-20) was mostly about making close, meaningful, lengthy relationships.

Let's take a closer look at the Person at the center of what making disciples is all about: Jesus.

Jesus' time with His Father

Jesus' relationship with His Father is the closest and most meaningful relationship there could be. This is abundantly clear when we consider several important features of this relationship that we should follow.

First, Jesus intentionally gave himself to consistent and intensive amounts of time to be with His Father.

- “At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place” (Luke 4:42).
- “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16).
- “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God” (Luke 6:12).
- “Each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37).
- “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives . . . and prayed” (Luke 22:39, 41).

Jesus loved His Father and loved being with Him, even when it was costly to His physical needs, other relationships, and tasks. He only had three years to accomplish His mission, yet He set aside vast amounts of time to dialogue with His Father. The One Person who often is assumed to least need any kind of help seemed to be the One who sought His Father's help the most.

Think about the passion Jesus had for His relationship with His Father and your lifestyle as His follower.

- How much do you think Jesus enjoyed getting alone with His Father?
- What other reasons might there be for Him to spend so much time with His Father?

- Since Jesus spent much time alone with His Father, and we are His followers, how important is it for us to set aside time to be with our Father?
- In light of our needs, time pressures, and global mission, what can Jesus' followers do to sustain the kind of "Father focus" that Jesus did?
- How much do you enjoy getting alone with your Heavenly Father?
- How do you evaluate the times you have with Him?
- How much help do you need from other disciples of Jesus to sustain time with your Father?

If we desire to be Christlike, we must begin by setting aside a substantial amount of time to spend in relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Jesus did only His Father's will

A second characteristic of Jesus' relationship with His Father that we seek to follow is Jesus' absolute determination to discern and do only what His Father was doing. His *actions* were a copy of what He observed in His Father.

- "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19).
- Speaking of His Father, Jesus says, "I always do what pleases him" (John 8:29).
- "The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me" (John 14:31).

Notice the relational component Jesus speaks of: He watches His Father and then does what He sees His Father doing. Jesus didn't lack the ability to act independently; He just wouldn't allow himself to act independently of His Father. Because of Jesus' love for His Father and absolute loyalty to Him, Jesus looked to

His Father for direction in all He did.

Think about everything we know Jesus did, such as going to Cana or Jerusalem, walking on water, or providing food for multitudes. Every single act was the direct result of Jesus' discerning His Father's will. Astonishing! What love for His Father! (see John 14:31).

Jesus' relationship with His Father models the ideal He intends for us as His disciples and for those we disciple: We are to watch and follow Him just as He watched and followed His Father, and we are to help those we are discipling to watch and follow Him as He followed His Father (chaps. 6—13).

Jesus judged only as His Father judged

A third characteristic of Jesus' relationship with His Father is that Jesus did not come to any *judgments* (conclusions) on His own. He had His own thoughts and was tempted to rely on His human understanding (see Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1-11; Prov. 3:5-6), but He passed each test by carefully submitting to the conclusions of His Father. "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30).

Jesus was so sensitive to His Father that although He was

Jesus said, "Follow me." If, for whatever reasons, He would not allow himself to do anything on His own but only did what He first saw His Father doing, how intentionally must we, as His disciples, learn to watch Him before we act? How much help will you need from fellow disciples to obey at this level? How much must we help those we coach in following Jesus to slow down and attempt to find out what Jesus is doing before acting?

How does knowing that Jesus refused to come to conclusions independently of His Father make you feel about Him? Do you desire to walk in this way? How much help will you need to walk as Jesus walked, especially when it comes to making judgments (conclusions) about people and circumstances? Where could you get this kind of help? Can you help others to walk as Jesus walked in this way? How?

tempted just as we are, He brought all His thoughts (before they became independent, unilateral judgments or conclusions) into the light before they lodged in His mind. (Note 2 Cor. 10:5.)

Think about all the encounters Jesus had with people: Pharisees, prostitutes, tax collectors, proud and selfish disciples. Never once did He make a judgment about any of them apart from discerning His Father's thoughts and agreeing with His Father.

Again, Jesus supremely demonstrates how we are to be His disciples and to help others be His disciples. To follow Him, we must deter-

mine to relate to our Father as He did. To do this, we must do all we can to find out His judgment concerning any person or situation. We, and those we disciple, need much help to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:3-6; chaps. 6—13).

Jesus spoke only as His Father spoke

The fourth characteristic of Jesus' relationship with His Father is this: After He had sensitively been with and listened to His Father, Jesus *said* nothing other than what He heard His Father guiding Him to say.

- "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (John 8:28).

- “For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. . . . So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (John 12:49-50).
- “The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10).

Can you imagine never speaking until you have conversed with your Heavenly Father to be sure it is what He wants said? This is precisely what Jesus did. Standing before Pilate, judged wrongly by Pharisees, mocked by even His own brothers, Jesus refrained from responding until He knew what His Father wanted Him to say.

Through His intentional relationship with His Father, Jesus spoke only words given Him by His Father. In so doing, He models for us how we ought to follow Him as His disciples: We are to *secure all the help needed* to say only what He is intending to say through us. To do this, I need not only the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures but also the company of others who are growing as Jesus’ disciples.

How much does meditating on Jesus’ relationship with His Father strengthen your admiration for Jesus? Why? What do you think about walking as He walked? How much help will you need to make serious progress in walking as Jesus walked? To whom might you say, “Please walk with me. I need help to walk as Jesus walked”? What do you think about prayerfully adopting a few others to help them be Jesus’ disciples? (see Mark 3:14).

