

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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How Did Jesus Make Disciples?

Biblical Disciple Making, Part 1

One of the important issues that is vital to discipleship is how our churches should go about making disciples. What is to be our discipleship methodology? In addition, our goal is not only to develop a simple, clear strategy for making authentic disciples, but we want it to be a biblical methodology. To accomplish this we must turn to the Scriptures to discover what the Bible teaches about disciple making.

Jesus said much about making disciples in the Gospels, and the church addresses the issue in Acts and the Epistles. There are two schools of thought. Some argue strongly that we should make disciples the way Jesus did. Jesus's methodology set the standard for all others, and the early church simply followed suit. Others argue that if we study the church's methodology in the book of Acts and the Epistles, we will see that it made disciples differently than Jesus did.

When we study discipleship in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the Epistles, we will note both similarities and differences. In this chapter I will investigate and show how Jesus made disciples. Then in the next chapter I will show how the early church made disciples and compare their method to Jesus's approach in an attempt to arrive at a biblical viewpoint that will help us with our methodology for disciple making.

It makes perfect sense, if we want to know how to make disciples, to study how Jesus—the master disciple maker—went about this task. To understand his methodology, we must first look at his message of discipleship.

Jesus's Message of Discipleship

I have divided this section on Jesus's message of discipleship into two parts. First, we will discover to whom he spoke; then we'll examine what he said to them.

His Audiences

Hermeneutics addresses how we interpret the Bible. And there are a number of hermeneutical principles that will help us interpret well the Scriptures. For example, one principle that will help us as we examine Jesus's teaching is that we must interpret a passage of Scripture in its context. We must ask, What do the passages that make up the surrounding context say that will help us understand our passage? I suspect that most false teaching is the result of taking passages out of their proper context.

In attempting to discern Jesus's message of discipleship and ultimately how he made disciples, it is critical to identify his audience. The importance of his audience will become even more evident when we examine what he taught. We must ask, When Jesus spoke, who was listening? To whom was he speaking, and why? At various times Jesus's audience was the crowd, the disciples, or a combination of the two.

The Crowds

Practically everywhere Jesus went throughout his public ministry, he drew large crowds (Matt. 8:1, 18; 12:46; 13:1–2; Mark 1:33, 45; 2:2, 13; 3:7–9, 20, 32; 4:1, 36; and so on). Much of his early public ministry involved healing and casting out demons, as well as teaching that addressed the issues of his day, and this obviously attracted much attention (Mark 1:28). While the size of these crowds likely varied, we get an idea of how big they could get from the feeding of the five thousand. They consisted mostly of Jewish people who were not disciples (believers). And the purpose of Jesus's ministry was to reach them and see them become disciples (Matt. 9:35–38).

The crowds literally followed Jesus from place to place, but they did so primarily for what he could do for them: heal them, teach them, cast out their demons, and so on. And this was okay, because this is the reason he had come to them (Mark 1:38). Some of these people became disciples (Matt. 8:18–22; 17:14–15—the father was probably a disciple, because he called Jesus “Lord”); others became his opponents and went so far as to laugh at him (9:23–24) and accept the responsibility for his death (27:24–25).

The Disciples

A second audience was Jesus's disciples (Matt. 5:1–2; 11:1; Mark 8:31; 10:32; John 13–17). Unlike the crowds, the disciples were those who obeyed Jesus's call to follow him and became believers in him. They consisted of two groups: the narrow circle and a broader circle.

The narrow circle were the Twelve who made up the core of his disciples. They ranged in occupation from fisherman to tax collector, and these are the men he called to follow him (see, for example, Mark 1:16–20), who later came to faith in him (John 2:11). To follow him, they had to leave their families, friends, property, and occupations (Matt. 19:27, 29). They entered into a special relationship with him and became the main focus of his ministry after he turned his attention from the crowds (John 13–17). This was a time of preparation for their role as apostles and future leaders who would lead the church, as seen in the book of Acts.

A study of the Twelve shows that they were divided into smaller groups with a leader of each. And one of these groups consisted of the brothers Peter and Andrew and James and John. They formed an inner circle that traveled with Jesus on special occasions. Peter was not only the leader of the inner circle but of the Twelve (Matt. 10:2).

The broader circle of disciples consisted of a variety of men and women, some in groups and others as individuals, who followed Jesus and believed in him. Luke makes reference to a group of men from whom Jesus chose the Twelve (Luke 6:13) and a group of women who helped support Jesus and the Twelve (8:1–3). Then there are a number of individual disciples, such as Zacchaeus, the tax collector (19:1–10); a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:18–19); Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57; John 19:38); and Nicodemus (John 3:1–21).

Jesus's Circle of Disciples

Both the Disciples and the Crowds

There are several instances when Jesus spoke to both his disciples and the crowds together in the same audience. For example, Mark 8:31 tells us that Jesus began to teach the Twelve. Then Mark notes later in verse 34 that Jesus included the crowd: "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples." In Luke we read that

Jesus spoke to a large group of his disciples and the crowd (6:17–19). Then at the end of this teaching session, Luke tells us that Jesus did this “in the hearing of the people” (7:1).

Jesus’s Primary Audiences

The Crowds

The Disciples

The Disciples and the Crowds

His Messages to His Audiences

Now that we have identified Jesus’s audiences, it is important that we examine the key passages that address what he said to each of these three audiences. Since this is a study of discipleship, we will examine Jesus’s key teachings but not all passages that relate in some way to discipleship. These key messages are found in the following references: Matthew 4:19; 8:18–22; 10:24–25; 16:24–26; 20:25–28; Mark 1:17; 8:34–38; Luke 5:27–28; 6:40; 9:23–25, 57–62; 14:25–33; John 1:43; 8:31–32; 12:26; 13:34–35; 15:8.

What Jesus Taught the Crowd

Jesus focused one message specifically on the crowd that consisted mostly of unbelievers. It is found in Luke 14:25–33, where Luke writes:

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation

and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus’s point is that before becoming his disciple, one must count the cost of what it will mean to follow him. He tells two parables that illustrate this truth: one about the builder of a tower and one about a king who goes to war. What is the cost? The answer is in verse 33—you have to be willing to give up everything to be Jesus’s disciple. Only when a person forsakes all is he totally following Jesus.

An initial look at this passage would seem to support the idea held by many that a person can be a Christian without being a disciple, because Jesus seems to be teaching what one must do to become a disciple: hate one’s family, take up one’s cross, and follow him.

However, the fact that he is addressing this message to a crowd of unbelievers and discussing how to become a disciple (believer) contradicts this. We have already seen that a disciple is a believer. Therefore, Jesus is teaching the crowd what they must do to become believers. But how might we square hating one’s parents and taking up a cross and following Jesus with grace? Is he teaching a works salvation?

Michael Wilkins answers this important question by pointing out that, while Jesus speaks to the crowd, his message must be personalized by each individual according to his or her own life circumstance (whether a believer, or as here, an unbeliever). There are several examples where Jesus demonstrates this personalized approach. One is the account of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16–22. In this incident, the rich young man approached Jesus and asked what he had to do to get eternal life. Jesus answered by saying that he must keep the commandments, and the man responded that he has kept them. Then Jesus instructed him to go and sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. The

man's response was to walk away disappointed because he had much wealth and was not willing to give it away.

Again, we might ask the same question as we asked about Luke 14:25–33 above: How does this square with grace? The answer is that Jesus personalizes his message to this man's individual situation. Jesus is telling him that before he is ready to believe in Jesus for salvation, he must address his fixation on his wealth. Wealth is a priority in his life and is preventing him from accepting Jesus as Messiah.

Jesus uses the same personal approach in the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. An expert in the law challenged Jesus with the question, What must I do to inherit eternal life? As he did with the rich ruler, Jesus refers to the Law, asking the man what is written in it. The man quotes the passage about loving God and loving one's neighbor as oneself; then he asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with the story of the Samaritan who, though he was not a Jew and was even despised by most Jews, went out of his way to help a stranded, injured Jewish man. Jesus uses the story to point out to this Jewish expert in the law that his national feelings of racial superiority were a major obstacle to his truly coming to faith.

So how might this personalization process help us to understand Luke 14:25–33? I believe that Jesus has a goal here that is similar to his goal in the other two passages—the issue is becoming a disciple or coming to faith in Jesus. Jesus personalizes his message to the crowd in Luke 14 so that they might consider certain obstacles that would prevent many from trusting in him. In the situation of some, it is their attachment to family. Jesus knew there were all kinds of good things that could get in the way of one's coming to faith, and family was one of them—especially a Jewish family. At that time a Jewish person who accepted Christ risked alienating his family. Thus Jesus is teaching them that they need first to deal with these familial matters and any other issues of life ("even his own life"), because these things could prevent them from embracing him as Savior.

This need to personalize our conversations with lost people is most apparent today as we seek to win people to the Savior. My experience is that it is rare that a person comes to faith in Christ the very first time I present the gospel. They all have issues that short-circuit their ability to place their trust in Christ. For the Muslim, Jew, or

even Catholic, it is often family issues that get in the way. They respond, “My family does not embrace this belief, and if I were to accept Christ, they would disown me.” Others are trusting their own good deeds to get them to heaven, and some are very proud of such deeds as giving money to charity or volunteering to feed the hungry. To them the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ is not what they want to hear. Their faith in their good works is preventing them from accepting by faith Jesus’s good work on the cross.

What Jesus Taught the Disciples

Jesus addressed a number of discipleship-related messages to his disciples. They fall into two categories. The first were those teachings that applied only to their time with Jesus during his earthly ministry. The second related to their ministry, both with Jesus in the Gospels and beyond.

The first category consists primarily of Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 10:5–15. They are a series of succinct commands that I have summarized in the following:

1. They were to go only to lost Israel, not to the Gentiles or Samaritans (vv. 5–6).
2. Their message to Israel was “The kingdom of heaven is near” (v. 7).
3. Their ministry involved healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons (v. 8).
4. They were to depend on those to whom they ministered for their livelihood. Thus they were not to take with them such items as money, clothes, sandals, or a staff (vv. 9–10).
5. On their journey, they were to stay only with worthy people. They were to give the home their greeting and let their peace rest on it (vv. 11–15).
6. It was also understood, according to Peter’s words in Matthew 19:27 and 29, that they would leave behind their families and their professions.

Again, it is most important to note that this teaching applied only to the disciples’ missionary outreach to Israel in the Gospels (while Jesus was still on earth), not to the church. Thus anyone who attempts to apply these to his or her ministry today is ripping this material out of its context.

The second category consists of five of Jesus's primary teachings on discipleship that relate to today as well as to his ministry in the Gospels. They address the following: the disciple's call to follow Jesus (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:27–28; John 1:43; 12:26); what it means to follow Jesus (Matt. 20:25–28; John 12:26); how disciples follow him (Matt. 8:18–22; 16:24–26; Luke 9:23–25, 57–62); how one can know that he or she is a true follower (John 8:31–32; 13:34–35; 15:8); and the results of following Jesus (Matt. 4:19).

1. *What are disciples supposed to do?* In Luke 14:25–33, we learn how to become a disciple or a believer in Christ. The next obvious question is, Now that I have become a disciple, what am I supposed to do? We can see the answer in several places in the Gospels where Jesus calls the disciples. In Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 Jesus challenges two of his disciples—the brothers Peter and Andrew—to come and follow him. He does the same with Levi (Matthew) in Luke 5:27 and Philip in John 1:43. The capstone to these passages is found in John 12:26 where Jesus says, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” Once a person becomes a disciple, he or she is to follow Jesus. Jesus's invitation is clear: come and follow me!

2. *What does it mean to follow Jesus?* What does following him entail? What is the essence of discipleship? If we were to put discipleship into a beaker and boil it down to its essence, what would we find? I think we would find servanthood, the very essence of discipleship. Disciples are servants. In John 12:26 Jesus associates “followership” with servanthood and stresses the importance of servanthood. Discipleship is all about service. And in Matthew 20:26–28 Jesus uses his own example of what servanthood looks like: “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Disciples of Christ are first his servants, who are willing to serve even to the point of death—the ultimate form of service.

Though not specifically mentioned in the text, I believe that obedience to Christ is understood. What do servants do? They obey their masters. What do we as servants do? We obey Christ, our Master. And this ties in well to Jesus's mandate in Matthew 28:20: “obey everything I have commanded you.”

3. *How do disciples follow Jesus?* In Matthew 16:24–26 (which is the same event as found in Luke 9:23–25), Jesus answers the question. He says to his disciples:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

In this passage Jesus is responding to Peter’s rebuke in verse 22. After Jesus explains to the disciples that he must die and be resurrected, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes him, saying, “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus responds, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Naturally this leads into our passage where Jesus says that, unlike Peter, the disciples need to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him. Peter is not denying himself and taking up his cross. It is possible that he had become so dependent on Jesus that any thought of not having him physically present was frightening. However, Jesus had taught them earlier, recorded in Mark 9:40, that someone is either for him or against him—there is no middle ground.

We as well as Jesus’s first-century disciples must learn to deny ourselves, that is, our will for our lives, and embrace his will for us whatever that may be. This involves our taking up a cross or dying to self. Often those sentenced to die by crucifixion were made to carry part of their cross to the site of crucifixion. I think that this practice is what Jesus is using to illustrate his words.

Jesus provides his disciples with more teaching on how they are to follow him in Matthew 8:18–22 (also in Luke 9:57–62). Jesus teaches certain would-be disciples the importance of putting Jesus ahead of their own personal desires for a place to live and family obligations. In the first instance, a teacher of the law approaches Jesus in verse 19 and states that he will follow him wherever he goes. From Jesus’s response in verse 20, we learn that this man does not understand that this would mean being homeless. Jesus’s point to the man is that following him would mean living on the fly, much like a homeless person. What Jesus is saying to the man is that he needs to understand the cost and then be willing to pay it, even if it means not having a home.

In the second situation, another person says to Jesus in verse 21 that he must delay his pursuit of discipleship to take care of an important family matter—the burial of his father. In the Near East of the first century, proper burial of a family member, especially the father, was a major concern. Either the father had recently died or the man wanted to delay discipleship until his father eventually died. Regardless, Jesus commands the son to follow him and let someone else bury his father. Again, as in Luke 14:26, family is seen as a potential deterrent to discipleship. Thus Jesus is teaching that we must not allow anything, especially family matters, to block our pursuit of discipleship.

4. *How can one know if he or she is a true disciple of Christ?* What are the marks or characteristics of a true Christ-follower? John's Gospel contains three passages that refer to how followers can truly know that they are Jesus's disciples or believers. John's emphasis both in his Gospel and in his first Epistle is on how one can know if he or she is a Christian. There are evidences for or marks of true discipleship.

The first mark or piece of evidence is found in John 8:31–32, where Jesus states that a true disciple will both believe and hold to his teachings. This means that they agree with his teachings and will not abandon them at some time in the future.

The second mark or piece of evidence is in John 13:34–35. Jesus says that true disciples love one another. Thus one who desires to be a disciple must stop and ask, do I really love other disciples? What is the evidence?

The third mark is found in John 15:8, where Jesus teaches that a true disciple bears fruit. This is similar to Jesus's warning to his disciples in Matthew 7:15–23, where he helps them discern true and false prophets. He says that you can know them by their fruit. False prophets produce thornbushes and thistles (bad works), while good prophets produce grapes and figs (good works).

5. *What is the result of following Jesus?* Now that we know what it will take to follow Jesus, what will be the result of becoming his disciple? The Savior addresses this in both Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17. In both of these passages Jesus invites two brothers (Peter and Andrew) to follow him. Then he announces what will be the result of following him: "I will make you fishers of men." I believe this is a reference to disciple making or evangelism, and we see them fishing for men

throughout the Gospels. These were fishermen, so they would understand the figure Jesus uses. His point is that you will do little commercial fishing from here on. Instead, you will be fishing for men, which means seeing others become disciples or believers.

What Jesus Taught the Disciples and the Crowd

We learned above that Jesus spoke to his disciples and the crowd about discipleship on two particular occasions. First, in Mark 8:31–33 Jesus teaches the disciples about his coming death. Then he includes the crowd and teaches that, to be his disciples, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him (vv. 34–38). We learned above that for his disciples this means abandoning our own will for our life and embracing his will for us, whatever that may be. This involves our taking up our cross, or dying to ourselves. But how do you explain Jesus’s teaching this to the crowd who are mostly unsaved? We have seen how the message applies to the disciples, but how does it apply to the crowd? Again, Jesus addresses that which is preventing them from believing in him. Here it is their pursuit of their will for themselves instead of his will for them. As long as they hold their agenda over his, they will not come to faith in him. The hope is that some day they will see the futility of pursuing their personal agendas, whatever they may be, and embrace his agenda, which is accepting Jesus as Messiah.

Luke 6:17–7:1 tells of another time when Jesus spoke to both the crowd and the disciples about discipleship issues. As you may recall, in Luke 6:17 Jesus is teaching both a large crowd of his disciples and a great number of people. The content of his message is Luke’s equivalent of the beatitudes or blessings found in Matthew 5:3–12, along with other topics, such as loving one’s enemies, judging others, discerning good and bad people, and the wise versus the foolish builders. We discover in Luke 7:1 that Jesus taught this in “the hearing of the people.” This was a message for his disciples regarding how they should handle various issues. That the crowd heard it does not seem to have made any difference. They heard the message, but there is no indication that it applied to them or that they even understood it.

So what have we learned so far in this chapter about Jesus’s major discipleship teaching in the Gospels? Scholar Michael Wilkins says it best: “Overall, discipleship teaching that is directed to the crowds deals with the act of becoming a

disciple (evangelism), whereas teaching directed to the disciples deals with growth in discipleship (Christian growth).”

Jesus’s Primary Discipleship Messages

To the Crowds

How to become a disciple (believer)—Luke 14:25–33

To the Disciples

Jesus’s early ministry only—Matt. 10:5–15 Jesus’s early and later ministry

1. What disciples do: they follow Jesus—Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:27; John 1:43; 12:26
2. What it means to follow Christ: to serve him—John 12:26; Matt. 20:26–28
3. How disciples follow Jesus: they deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him—Matt. 16:24–26; Luke 9:23–25; Matt. 8:18–22; Luke 9:57–62
4. The marks of a true disciple: they follow Christ’s teaching, love one another, and bear fruit—John 8:31–32; 13:34–35; 15:8
5. The result of following Christ: they become fishers of men or disciple makers—Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:7

To the Crowds and Disciples

Mark 8:31–38; Luke 6:17–7:1

Jesus’s Methods of Discipleship

Now that we know Jesus’s audiences and his message for them, we need to examine the methods he used to make disciples in the context of those audiences.

Who Made Disciples?

If we use the term *disciple* in a general sense, we will discover that in the Gospels one group and two individuals were the primary disciple makers. The Pharisees as a group made disciples. They are mentioned in Matthew 22:15–16; Mark 2:18; and Luke 5:33. John the Baptist was an individual who had disciples (see Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; John 1:35; 3:25).

The focus of this section is on the Savior as disciple maker. In the Scriptures there are numerous references to him as the master disciple maker and to his disciples. What I want to point out in the Gospels is that he, and no one else, was the primary maker of disciples. Discipleship in the Gospels took place with Jesus in a personal relationship.

When Did Jesus Make Disciples?

Asking when Jesus made disciples does not refer to the year, month, or days of his activities in the Gospels, as important as they may be. The important thing about the timing is that his disciple making took place before Pentecost. This was a time when the Holy Spirit did not indwell believers on a permanent basis. In John 14:16 Jesus says of the Spirit: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” This is important because the disciples’ understanding of Jesus’s teaching was limited prior to Pentecost (see v. 26). However, after Pentecost they would understand much if not all of his teaching (see 16:13). And this would make a significant difference in their ability to make disciples. I will explore this further in the next chapter.

How Did Jesus Make Disciples?

Many believe that the key to our making disciples in the twenty-first century is to follow Jesus’s method in the first century. There are at least four ways he went about it, depending on whether he was interacting with a large group (the crowd), a small group (the Twelve), a smaller group (his inner circle), or one-on-one.

He Preached

Jesus preached to the crowd. We must keep in mind that making disciples included evangelism in a large-group context, because one must first *become* a disciple or believer. This was Jesus’s goal with the crowds (Matt. 9:35–38). As we discovered earlier in the chapter, Jesus’s preaching attracted large crowds, and the primary

purpose of his ministry with the crowds was to make them disciples (believers). Jesus's practice was to issue an open call to the crowds (Luke 14:25–27). As we saw earlier, Jesus's message was personalized to the crowd (vv. 25–35), and he used it to call the crowd to make a personal decision to become his disciples. As he preached, the evidence that one had become a disciple was that he or she came out of the crowd and called Jesus “Lord” (Matt. 8:18–21; Luke 17:14–15). Here we note that Jesus addressed discipleship in the context of a large group of people.

He Focused on a Small Group

Jesus poured his life into a small group of disciples, the Twelve whom he had called (see, for example, Mark 1:16–20). In time they came to faith (John 2:11). Initially Jesus ministered publicly to the crowd but individually to the Twelve. Regarding the latter, Mark writes, “He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). However, he reached a point where he shifted his ministry away from the crowd and focused primarily on the Twelve (see Mark 9–16) to prepare them as apostles for their leadership ministry in the church after Pentecost. So, with this small group, he pursued discipleship.

He Spent Time Alone with the Inner Circle

Jesus poured his life into an even smaller group, an inner circle of the Twelve. Right after Jesus questioned his disciples about his identity and confronted Peter over his response to Jesus's prediction of his death, he led an inner circle of disciples—Peter, James, and John—up on a mountain, where he was alone with them (Mark 9:2) and where they witnessed his transfiguration (vv. 3–13). Thus Jesus not only disciplined the Twelve as a small group but took the inner circle aside for further discipling.

He Counseled Individuals

Jesus counseled a new disciple. I am trying to be careful with the wording here. Note that I am not saying that Jesus disciplined an individual. Jesus did not have an ongoing discipling relationship with individuals, but he did counsel, or do a one-time discipling, with individuals, such as Nicodemus (John 3) and Peter (John 21).

In Mark 5:1–20 Jesus cast a demon out of a man who then came to faith. The man insisted on following Jesus, but instead, Jesus instructed him to go home to his family and tell them about his healing and conversion. Jesus could have poured his life into the man as a new disciple (believer) who needed to grow as a disciple, but he did not. This is important because, unlike the encouragement and practice of many today, it does not appear that Jesus disciplined many individuals, if any. I do not believe that it is wrong to disciple individuals. At a critical time in my daughter's spiritual development, a young lady disciplined her, and to this day my daughter is a strong believer. However, it would seem that a better strategy, in terms of reaching more people, is to minister to large groups of nondisciples (the crowd) and disciple medium and small groups, such as Jesus did with the Twelve and the inner circle. And, of course, in Matthew 28:19 Jesus's challenge is for us to disciple not only unbelievers (evangelism) but the entire church (edification), not just a few individuals who are interested in going further with Christ.

Jesus's Methods for Making Disciples

Jesus preached to the crowds (large group)

Jesus poured his life into the disciples (small group)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why does the author think it is important for disciple makers to identify Jesus's audiences when studying his discipleship messages in the Gospels? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. In Luke 14:25–33 Jesus extends an invitation to the crowd to become his disciples. Since the crowd consists primarily of unbelievers, how does the author explain Jesus's invitation? Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why? Is Jesus teaching that works are somehow involved in salvation? Why or why not? How would you square Jesus's sermon with grace?

3. Do you agree with the author's distinction between Jesus's teaching of the disciples that relates only to his ministry while on earth versus that which applied back then and up to today? Why or why not? What difference does such a distinction make?

4. The author argues that Jesus's teaching that is directed to the crowds deals with the act of becoming a disciple (evangelism), whereas teaching directed to the disciples deals with growth in discipleship (sanctification). Do you agree? Why or why not? How important is it to make this distinction?

5. Why is it important to address the timing of Jesus's making disciples? What difference do Pentecost and the indwelling of the Spirit have on making disciples?

6. What were Jesus's methods for making disciples? Did the author miss any? Can you think of some situations when Jesus disciplined individuals?¹

¹ Aubrey Malphurs, [*Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 47–59.