

## Making Disciples Today

“Discipleship” is something of a buzz word in churches these days. But what does it actually mean? Is it just “the flavour of the month,” here today and gone tomorrow? John Bowen writes out of many years of learning and teaching about discipleship, both its theory and its practice. In this booklet, he grounds the idea in scripture and in a wider theological context, and gives practical suggestions for how churches can grow into communities where discipleship is understood and practiced on a daily basis as a normal, healthy, joyful reality.



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A WYCLIFFE BOOKLET



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What, Why and  
How ... on Earth?

JOHN BOWEN

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WHEN JESUS WALKED THIS EARTH, the word “Christian” had not been invented. In fact, it didn’t come into existence for some decades after that. And even then, it was not a word that the “Christians” chose for themselves: it was a label put on them by other people.

The first “Christians” (it’s difficult to avoid the word now) preferred to call themselves “disciples.” It is by far the commonest word for a Christian in the New Testament. But what is a disciple? The word disciple simply means learner, or student. This means that, in the first place, those early Christians thought of themselves as students. For them, the point of being a Christian was to learn something—as if they were part of a school. To us, that seems a little strange. What exactly was this school? What did it mean to them to be “disciples”? And what exactly were they studying?

# 1. What's Discipleship All About?

The idea of discipleship goes back to Jesus himself, who announced that he was (among other things) a teacher. “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am.” (John 13:13) In many ways he was like a Jewish rabbi, or teacher, and indeed the disciples sometimes referred to him as “Rabbi.” So, not surprisingly, his first followers were referred to as his “disciples”—his students. Of course, over time they came to realize that Jesus was more than a teacher—much more—but he was never less than that.

So what happened to this idea of the teacher and the student after Jesus’ death and resurrection when he was no longer around in the flesh? It didn’t disappear. Instead, it was one of the things that catapulted the church into the next stage of its life and its phenomenal growth in the decades that followed. The link between discipleship as it is described in the Gospels and what happened afterwards is at the heart of Jesus’ final instruction to his followers at the very end of Matthew’s Gospel—what has come to be called the Great Commission:

Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

“Go ... make disciples!” Or, as we may translate it, “Go ... make students! Enrol people in my school!”<sup>1</sup> It’s a strange final command, isn’t it, when you think about it? We might have expected different famous last words: “Go ... and remember to love your neighbours as yourselves” perhaps. Or “Go ... and don’t forget to pray for your enemies.” Or even “Go ... preach the Gospel and make converts.” But no: his priority is making disciples—he wants those who have already had the experience of being his students to invite others to have that experience too. Why was that so important to him?

## A disciple is an apprentice

I find these days that I’m not entirely happy with saying that “disciple” means “student.” The problem is that, in our world, the word “student” normally conjures up images of (generally) young people sitting in rows taking notes on a lecture. You may know the old definition of a lecture: the means by which the professor’s notes become the student’s notes ... without passing through the minds of either. Certainly Jesus gave “lectures” (think of the Sermon on the Mount—though I rather doubt the twelve took notes, and I’m quite sure their minds were engaged) but that wasn’t his favourite teaching technique.

What the disciples experienced was closer to what we would call an apprenticeship. I was once preaching about this in my own home church, and had a brainwave. Instead of pontificating about what apprenticeship means, I invited my

friend Ken to come up from the congregation so that I could interview him. Ken is an electrician. The interview really only had one question: “So, Ken, how did you learn to be an electrician?” The answer was, “Well, on Mondays, we went to class and were taught the theory of electronics. Then, from Tuesday to Friday, we were out on the job with a master electrician, and learned in a hands-on kind of way how to be electricians.” And the end product was not an expert on the theory of electronics, but someone who was a competent professional electrician.

Bingo. There was the parallel with how Jesus taught his disciples. Yes, there was talking, but there was also plenty of action, and the two were integrated. And the end of the process was not a bunch of people with answers to every theoretical question about God and the Bible, but graduates of a rigorous three-year apprenticeship in the work of the Kingdom—what it means and what they were supposed to do about it. Not that they were perfect (that much is clear), but one of the very lessons they were supposed to have learned was that the Kingdom is for those who understand that they are likely to fail—and know how to respond when they do.

If they had received a certificate at the end of the three years, it would have said something like this:

*This is to certify that*

SIMON PETER OF GALILEE

**Has spent three years in the school of Jesus,  
has interacted with Jesus on a daily basis,  
has watched him and listened to him,**

**asked questions and tried to answer Jesus’ questions.  
He has also had some experience of doing  
the same kind of work as Jesus.**

**Once he has received the power of the Holy Spirit,  
in the opinion of Jesus, SIMON PETER will be qualified  
to lead others to learn the ways of Jesus.**

This means that when Jesus said, as he left this earth, “Go, make disciples,” he meant, “Go and put others through the same kind of training program that you had. Invite others into this process of learning about the Kingdom.” It is as if Jesus is running a school—a trade school, where the training includes lots of hands-on experience—and sending the first graduates out to start “satellite campuses” wherever they went.<sup>2</sup>

## The trade school of Jesus

Now, when you are finding out about a school, you generally want to know what it is good for. Some have a reputation for good training in medicine or computers or business. People thinking about post-secondary education generally start the other way round: they have a particular interest—biology or carpentry or creative writing, say—so they look around for a school that has a reputation for teaching those things well.

So, in the case of Jesus’ trade school, it seems reasonable to ask: What is this school good for? What sort of thing do people learn there? What is Jesus’ curriculum? And perhaps most fundamental of all: why would he think that running a school

was so important anyway? After all, we don't normally think of the church as a school. There are different ways to answer that question—and they all overlap.

### *A school for life*

Novelist Dorothy Sayers wrote a series of plays for radio based on the life of Jesus and called *The Man Born to be King*. In one of those plays, she puts into the mouth of Mary Magdalene the sort of thing Mary might have said to Jesus as she recalled the first time she met him:

Did you know? My friends and I came there that day to mock you. We thought you would be sour and grim, hating all beauty and treating life as an enemy. But when I saw you, I was amazed. You were the only person there who was really alive. The rest of us were going about half-dead—making the gestures of life, pretending to be real people. The life was not with us but with you—intense and shining, like the strong sun when it rises and turns the flames of our candles to pale smoke. And I wept and was ashamed, seeing myself such a thing of trash and tawdry. But when you spoke to me, I felt the flame of the sun in my heart. I came alive for the first time. And I love life all the more since I have learnt its meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Sayers explains elsewhere: “What she sees in Jesus is the Life—the blazing light of living intensely.”<sup>4</sup>

What did Jesus come to teach? Mary's answer is that Jesus is a teacher of life. He teaches us what life is all about: how to live as God's people in God's world in God's way—and in the

friendship of God. He said on one occasion, “I have come so that people might have life and have it in all its fullness!”—or, as some translations say, “abundant life.” (John 10:10) That is what people saw in Jesus: a unique quality of life. And (as Sayers sees it), it was that kind of life which attracted people like Mary to be his followers. They wanted the kind of life that they saw in Jesus for themselves, and they wanted to hang around with him in order to learn from him how to have it.

But there is a deeper answer than that.

### *Restoring the image*

Someone has said there is nothing in the teaching of Paul that he did not get from Jesus. But Paul often puts Jesus' ideas into other words, or extends them in new directions. So Paul doesn't say anything about “abundant life,” but he does take that same idea and explain it a different way. He says, for example, that:

All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Instead of talking about “abundant life,” he teaches that those who follow Jesus are slowly being changed to be like Jesus, who is the image of God. The two ways of talking are the same yet different. We can think of it this way:



JESUS ...

*speaks about:*

Abundant life

*assumes that:*

We don't experience it but we could

*promises that:*

He can give abundant life

PAUL ...

*speaks about:*

Being in the image of God

*assumes that:*

Sin has messed up the image of God in us

*promises that:*

The Holy Spirit can shape us into God's image—that is, to be like Jesus

One way that Paul teases out the meaning of Jesus' promise is by adding the idea of process: abundant life is something we grow into over time. So what kind of process is he thinking of? And what would someone look like who was being transformed in that way? It's probably worth pointing out that becoming like Jesus does not mean becoming a pious superman or superwoman. Neither does it mean becoming overly religious (as though Jesus was actually either of those things). Nor does it mean walking on water, handy though that might sometimes be. Rather, it is to become what Jesus was: a human being as God always intended human beings to be. John Stott puts it this way:

If we had to sum up in a single brief sentence what life is all about, why Jesus Christ came into this world to live and die and rise, and what God is up to in the long-drawn-out historical process both BC and AD, it would be difficult to find a more succinct explanation than this: *God is making*

*human beings more human by making them more like Christ.*

For God created us in his own image in the first place, which we then spoiled and skewed by our disobedience. Now he is busy restoring it. And he is doing it by making us like Christ, since Christ is both perfect man and perfect image of God.<sup>5</sup>

And the process by which this transformation happens is what we call discipleship. Years ago, I knew a family where a couple had adopted twins, and they were proving to be quite a handful. One day, while I was visiting, one of the eight-year-olds came in from the yard where she had been playing with a friend, and said to her father, "Daddy, was I adopted or adapted?" He said with a wry smile, "You were adopted, sweetheart: we're still working on the adapting." That's what the school of Jesus is about: God adopts us through Christ, and then gradually adapts us to the life—the abundant life—of God's new family, where everyone reflects the beauty of God's image. That's what discipleship is about.

### *Beginning in the Old Testament*

Talk of "how God made us" and "the image of God," of course, makes us think of the creation story and the Old Testament. And, as is so often the case, the Old Testament adds depth to what we read in the New Testament. In this case, we discover in the Old Testament that the idea of God's people as a school is not new. Once God had "adopted" the people of Israel to be bearers of God's light and life to the world,<sup>6</sup> one way that God "adapted" them for this role was by becoming their teacher.<sup>7</sup>



The references are too many to list. But a couple are particularly significant. At the end of his life, Moses sums up his time of leadership, and gives them this advice:

“See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, *I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe* in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!’” (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)

Moses is emphasizing, first of all, that the passing on of wisdom about how to live is not just for our intellectual interest: it is to be acted upon. Moses teaches things for the Israelites “to observe.” Jesus has the same concern centuries later, when he explains that making disciples is “teaching them *to obey* everything that I have commanded you.” We’ll look at that later.

Moses’ second emphasis is that this obedience is not just for the benefit of God’s people, but so that the life of the community should be a witness to everybody around. The quality of life among God’s people should be such that other nations round about sit up and take notice. Their life-style will be a witness. As Eugene Peterson translates verse six: “When people hear and see what’s going on, they’ll say, ‘What a great nation! So wise, so understanding! We’ve never seen anything like it.’”

Later on in the Old Testament story, a new theme emerges. The prophet Isaiah foresees that, when the Messiah comes, it will not only be God’s traditional people who will follow what they have been taught. Other nations will come and ask for the same kind of instruction:

In days to come, the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; *that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.*” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2-3)

Like Moses, these nations (the “peoples”) are not interested in just learning theoretical information about the ways of God. What they are passionate for—passionate enough to travel to Jerusalem and identify with Israel’s God—is “to walk in [God’s] paths.” They too want to live as God’s people in God’s world in God’s ways. This is a revolutionary vision that Isaiah has, one that could change the world!

All these themes—a school for life, the restoration of God’s image in us, the Old Testament emphasis on learning the Creator’s ways—may make it seem that the school of Jesus centres on us: giving *us* abundant life, making *us* more fully human. And of course, it is about those things—and yet it is not only about those things. Behind all these things lies a bigger idea yet—in fact, the biggest idea of all.

### *The redemption of all things*

If you ask a random selection of Christians what the Good News of Christianity—the Gospel—is, you will get a variety of answers: that God loves us just as we are, that Christ died for our sins, that the resurrection opens the way to eternal life, and many more. All these are true, but each one is only part of the truth.

The bigger Good News is this: that the Creator in mercy is utterly committed to restoring the world that we have so damaged—and to do so through Jesus Christ. This is something we could never have guessed at or even dared to hope for unless God had told us—and showed us—that it was so. God has not given up on us. God is for us, God is with us, God is at work in our world. There is hope. All will yet be well. This is what Jesus called “the Good News of the Kingdom.” (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 24:14, etc.)

People are not wrong in those other explanations of the Gospel. Yes, God loved us “while we were yet sinners:” this is why God hasn’t given up on our damaged world. Yes, Christ died for our sins: that is what opens the way for us to be involved with God in God’s work. And yes, the resurrection is amazing: not just because it speaks of life after death, but more importantly because it is a foretaste of that new world that God is shaping, where death and decay and destruction are done away with.

But the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts. What the Creator is working on is in fact “a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up *all things* in him [Jesus Christ], things in

heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:10) “All things” certainly includes human beings, but it stretches to include ... well, everything that God has made. This is why, for example, Christians get involved in environmental issues: they understand that the Creator’s plan for “all things” includes the renewing of the environment.<sup>8</sup>

So ... how does this Good News relate to discipleship? There are many pictures in the New Testament to describe Christians—we are children of God, servants of God, the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, and so on—and each one tells us something of how we relate to God and God’s work of renewal. But “disciple” tells us something the others do not. It tells us that in relation to God, we are learners, learning from Jesus the ways of God to make “all things new,” learning to imitate God and to play our part in God’s work.

All this lies behind the first Christians’ conviction that they were called to be “disciples.” You can see why it was such a rich idea.

## 2. Being Jesus' Apprentices Today

So what does all this have to say to us today? In one sense, nothing has changed: the heart of being a Christian is still being an apprentice of Jesus Christ, learning from him how to live the ways of his Kingdom. But, of course, in another sense, everything has changed: we can't simply follow him around the hills of Galilee and watch him at work.

So how do we learn to be his apprentices today? Like any learning, any apprenticeship, it is a long-term commitment. The things we need to learn can't be learned overnight. After all, if you want to be a plumber, one website I discovered says that it will require: "a five year apprenticeship, ten thousand hours plus 744 hours of class room studies ... and then work for a master plumber for five years, and once you have ten years documented time in, then you can take the four-part masters exams."<sup>9</sup> Many other training programs have similar requirements. As you might imagine, it is not going take less time to be remade in the image of God than it takes to become a plumber!

Exactly how long does the process take, then? As you can tell, this training is not a thing that can be accomplished just by reading a book on the topic, or by a twelve-week classroom course or even a year-long study group—although all of those may help. There are no short cuts. Training in the trade school of Jesus is a lifelong process that takes our whole lives and requires a daily, 24/7 commitment to put one foot in front of the other on the road of learning. (*The Book of Acts* makes it

pretty clear that even the original twelve disciples didn't exactly finish their learning on the Day of Pentecost.) The school of Jesus requires what Friedrich Nietzsche called "a long obedience in the same direction."<sup>10</sup>

How then does this work? I believe there are five main components to the curriculum of Jesus' training program:

### 1. Community

One way we grow as disciples is through the Christian community. There are no "lone ranger" disciples. We need one another—to challenge, to encourage, to teach and (basically) to love each other into the ways of the Kingdom. Not that this means the community exists just to help me along in my discipleship. That would suggest a kind of narcissism—hardly an item on the curriculum in the school of Jesus. Actually, in the life of discipleship, there is a kind of symbiosis between the individual and the community.

On the one hand, for a Christian community, an individual is of infinite worth. Deep in the DNA of Christianity is Jesus' story of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep who are safe, in order to go searching for the single lost one. That is how precious a single individual is to God. But, on the other hand, God's goal is not a lot of isolated disciples who simply feed off the community for sustenance whenever they need it, as if the church were just some kind of spiritual fast-food restaurant. After all, the shepherd does not find the lost sheep and then take care of it off in isolation. He brings it back

to the sheepfold, where it belongs.<sup>11</sup> God's desire is to form a community of disciples which can in all seriousness be called "the body of Christ," in which each member plays a part. This is a community which, however dimly, reflects the love that exists between the Persons of the Trinity. And (remembering Moses' words), it is becoming a model for the world of how people can live together.

This doesn't mean that growth in discipleship happens simply by spending lots of time with other church people. If only it were that simple! No, the relationships in the Christian community which will help our discipleship most are those that have an explicitly spiritual component. Some years ago, I did some research into what helps young people maintain their faith as they move into adulthood. One thing I discovered was that Christian friends were very significant. Not just any Christian friends, however, but specifically friends with whom there could be open and personal conversations about faith, where people explicitly encouraged and sometimes challenged one another in their discipleship.<sup>12</sup>

In the history of the church, the importance of community has been expressed in different ways. Three very different examples will give an idea of how diverse—and yet how similar at their core—forms of Christian community can be.

- Monastic communities often began as a group of friends who prayed and tried to learn to serve God together. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, for example, had a strong sense of being taught by Jesus. He recalled his own spiritual formation in terms of a school: "At this time," he

said, "God treated [me] as a school master [treats] a boy whom he teaches."<sup>13</sup> Monastic communities, old and new, are places where people learn discipleship together.

- In the Wesleyan Movement of the 1700s, which led to the birth of the worldwide Methodist movement, one of the key components was that of small groups (called "class meetings") where people regularly met to share their lives, to care for one another, and to pray together. Unlike many movements started by a charismatic leader, the Methodist movement continued to grow and spread for decades after the death of John Wesley, not least because of the grass-roots strength of the "classes."<sup>14</sup>
- One of the fastest growing churches in Canada, The Meeting House (based in Oakville, Ontario), is well-known for meeting in cinemas on Sunday mornings. Their strength, however, is less visible: it is in the network of "home churches" that fans out into the neighbourhood from each cinema gathering. In fact, Bruxy Cavey, their Teaching Pastor, has gone so far as to say, "Sunday morning is a dietary supplement!" It is the close relationships formed in the home churches that foster strong discipleship.

Of course, small groups are only one of the ways in which community is the incubator of discipleship. Community can be as few as just two people! My wife and I spend time reading the Bible and praying together after breakfast whenever we can. That is a form of community which sustains us in our

discipleship. I also have a friend I meet with once a month or so, to chat about our lives, and the challenges we are facing in following Jesus, and to pray for one another. This is an ancient tradition known as “soul friendship,” and it too nurtures discipleship. Groups that work together, whether running a food bank or singing in a choir, can also be incubators for communal discipleship.

It doesn't really matter where we find a Christian community where we are known and can grow in discipleship—home Bible study groups, one-on-one relationships, men's breakfasts, groups coming together to serve—there are a thousand variations—but if we are to develop in our apprenticeship, we will need to find it somewhere. And unfortunately, Sunday morning at church may not be the best place to develop this kind of relationship.

## 2. Scripture

Secondly, we cannot do without the Bible. Why? Because the Bible is the story of God at work in the world. And within that Big Story are many smaller stories of how God shaped people in the ways of the Kingdom for thousands of years before we ever came along. We read those stories, of their successes (a few), their failures (many), and their wrestling with God. And we see how each of those personal stories was woven into the Big Story of God's work in the world.

Jesus' original disciples would have known this Story—and those stories—very well. Indeed, being Jewish, they were born

into a world shaped by that story. The story formed the background against which the twelve came to understand who Jesus was and what he was doing. When he said “Kingdom” or “Son of Man” or “in that day,” they did not need a Bible encyclopedia to understand what he meant. Those terms were part of The Story that was in their lifeblood.

Everybody lives within a story. And today our culture tells lots of stories about the world which compete with the God Story to grab our loyalty. Some are stories about the importance of self-fulfilment, others are stories of playing it safe, and yet others are stories of how to be (and feel) powerful. As a result, we need to be reminded daily of what story we truly belong to.

One of the most popular stories in our culture is what I think of as the Walt Disney myth: “You can be anything you want to be.” Nothing in the Christian story would support this slogan: it is unrealistic and unkind. Blogger Diana Hartman responds to the suggestion that you can be whatever you want to be: “No, you can't. If that were true there would be a lot fewer janitors and a lot more astronauts. ... The idea that we're all born with an unlimited list of occupational possibilities to pursue is a heartless assertion to foist upon children and a set-up for adults.”<sup>15</sup> The Christian story would say instead something like this: “You can become whatever your loving Creator has gifted you to be. Follow Jesus and let his Spirit develop your unique character and your gifts.” And that story leads to life.

How then do we become sufficiently familiar with God's story that we can identify competing stories and be discerning?

On one level, the simplest way to get some sense of the story of the Bible is to read it from cover to cover. Many Christians do this on a regular basis, following their own or someone else's system, and often reading portions of the New and Old Testaments each day. Others follow systems developed by their churches, such as the Revised Common Lectionary, used in many Protestant denominations, which takes the reader through most of the New Testament and much of the Old over a period of three years.

There are also several organizations which offer printed and online material containing readings for each day, explanatory notes, and guidance for prayer. My personal favourite—probably because they were a great help to me when I was a teenager, beginning to read the Bible for myself—is called Scripture Union. Today, as well as offering printed notes for every day, they also have a program called E100, which guides readers through fifty key chapters of the Old Testament and fifty from the New.<sup>16</sup> This helps give the broad overview of the Bible many of us lack, but which helps us make sense of the details.

Having said that, *how* we get to know the Bible and live in its story is secondary. Personal reading is basic. Listening to good preaching which explains the Bible helps greatly. Studying a chapter with a friend over coffee every couple of weeks makes a difference. Working with scripture in a regular small group is great. What is basic, however, is the need to do it. Simply hearing the Bible read week by week, without understanding or study, is hardly going to shape our characters as disciples.

Of course, simply knowing the Bible is not enough by itself. I heard once of a man who had memorized the whole Bible. Sadly, the report said nothing about how amazingly Christ-like his life was. There is a difference between reading the Bible for information and reading the Bible for our formation as disciples. We will return to this theme later.

### 3. Prayer and worship

We are also formed in our discipleship by prayer and worship. Let's begin with worship.

#### *Worship together*

When we get together for worship, what exactly are we doing? At the heart of it, we are responding to God's love. We are celebrating God's renewing, redeeming, restoring love at work in the world—and reminding ourselves what a privilege it is to be a part of it. In worship, we hear the stories of the God who is our Teacher as well as our Saviour and Lord, and we remind ourselves of the big story we are to live out of (and what is the creed if not a point-form summary of the story?). We also confess where we have failed in our apprenticeship—and every single time we are given a fresh start. Amazing!

Then, at the climax of worship—whether in our particular tradition we do it daily, weekly, or less frequently—we come to Jesus' table to be refreshed and renewed. Although different denominations do the service differently (and call it different things), at its heart it is always the same. It involves receiving



bread and wine (in some sense—our understandings will vary—his “body and blood”) from the hand of our Teacher. By doing so, we are reminded that he gave his life for the redemption of the world. And alongside that, we are reminded that we are the direct descendants of the first disciples at that first supper, who were the first to receive bread and wine from Jesus. So, like them, by taking part in this meal we commit ourselves to following in his footsteps.

Finally, at the end of the service, we “go in peace to love and serve the Lord” (as Anglicans put it) in his mission in the world.

In these ways, worship in our church communities and discipleship are intimately connected. You can't have one without the other.

### *Worship alone*

There is also a place for individual prayer and worship. How do we do that? There are many possibilities, and it is good to experiment and discover the advantages of each. For a start, prayer can be at set times—say at the beginning and the end of the day, most naturally in conjunction with our Bible reading. (The end of the day, of course, brings with it the danger of falling asleep!) Spontaneous prayer is equally good—at any point as our day unfolds, and as the need arises. (Some call these “arrow prayers.”) We can make use of set prayers, or our prayer can be conversational, as though we are talking to a friend. Most experienced pray-ers make use of different ways at different times of their lives. Once again, how we do it is secondary: what is crucial is that we do it.

So how does prayer help us develop in our discipleship? Here are a few of the ways:

- All relationships are strengthened by free and open conversation, so at a very basic level, prayer is a conversation which strengthens our relationship to Jesus.
- When we bring our needs and the needs of others to Jesus, it is as though it opens a door for him to be involved in the situation, and for us to observe how he works.
- Prayer is also a way of listening to the Teacher: “Lord, what are you doing in this situation?” “Lord, what are you trying to say to me?” “Lord, is there something you want me to do or to learn here?”
- C.S. Lewis thought the most important thing for us to learn about prayer is not how to get “answers to prayer,” but to pray the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane: “Please, not what I want. You, what do you want?” (Matthew 26:39) “For most of us,” says Lewis, “the prayer in Gethsemane is the only model. Removing mountains can wait.”<sup>17</sup>

In this kind of apprenticeship, the relationship between Master Craftsman and apprentice is key: and prayer is one way we stay close and tuned in to the one we are learning from.

### *Alone and together*

Although I have separated personal prayer from worship in the community, in fact the two support one another. If my



personal spiritual life is in good shape, that will contribute to the joy of corporate worship; and on the other hand, strong worship with others will be a springboard to my personal spiritual health. In some ways, personal prayer is harder work—not that there is anything wrong with hard work in discipleship: it's part of the package—but when I am with others in worship, there is a sense in which the community helps me in that work, or even (if I am tired or discouraged) carries me in worship.

Other things can contribute to a life of prayer and worship. Many people take a day away at a retreat centre a couple of times a year to get away from the busy-ness of their lives, and to be renewed spiritually. Many such centres offer programs for beginners to guide you through such a day, which makes it less intimidating. Keeping a journal (not necessarily daily) is a good way to track the ups and down of our apprenticeship. Other people take time to go on a pilgrimage: the Camino in northern Spain is one of the most popular. And, nearer to home, there is a wealth of books and websites on the spiritual life which can help us grow.

#### 4. Obedience

The fourth element in Christian apprenticeship is in many ways the toughest. The word “obedience” has a bad rap in our world: it smacks too much of authoritarianism and someone undermining my personal freedom. Yet the fact is that we are

all obedient, perhaps twenty times every day, and we hardly notice it. We obey traffic signals, the directions on a medicine bottle, the rules of language, the call of “Dinner’s ready!” or the advice of a personal trainer, without a moment’s thought. (You could try counting how often you are obedient in a single day. You might be surprised.)

Why do we obey these things, these people? Because—quite simply—we know that obeying at these times is good for us. This kind of obedience makes life liveable, and it’s become habitual. It’s just part of who we are. We hardly think of these situations as examples of “obedience.” We don’t often feel that these things cramp our personal freedom: in fact, we know perfectly well that without them there could be no real freedom. (Obeying a red light, to take just one example, means you keep the freedom to stay alive. It would be foolish to believe that a red light cramps your freedom.)

Let me put it bluntly: being an apprentice of Jesus means obeying Jesus. He says, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you *do* them.” (John 13:17) If Ken had simply gone to class on Mondays, he would never have become an electrician. More importantly, if he had not obeyed the directions of the master electrician, he would not be such a fine electrician today. In the same way, we will never be shaped by the values of the Kingdom unless we learn that same kind of costly obedience: love your enemies, forgive seventy times seven times, go the second mile, care for the poor, and so on.

### *Obedience as behavioural change*

Every one of these instructions requires a conscious, deliberate choice to obey—often the opposite of the choice we would naturally make. And it hurts—just like a new exercise at the gym hurts—until it becomes second nature to us. But the ways of the Kingdom, which in general are not natural to us, need to become precisely that—*second* nature to us. Developing that second nature is precisely what God’s work in our lives is all about.

What does this obedience look like? On one level, it can be quite straightforward. A Catholic missionary in Tanzania told me the following story. A group of Maasai warriors carried to the local missionary hospital a man of a different tribe who had been gored by a wild animal. There, the doctor was able to save his life. However, he was curious, since the Maasai would not normally feel responsibility for someone who belonged to another tribe, so he asked the Maasai why they had brought the man to the hospital. The leader replied, “Well, that’s the way the story goes.” “What do you mean? What story?” asked the doctor. And the elder replied, “I’m not sure I remember it right. But it’s something like this: there was this guy who was beaten up by thieves, and people from his own ethnic group kept passing him by. And then someone from a different tribe came by and took care of him. So we knew we had to bring him.”<sup>18</sup>

Here is a group of people who have lived a certain way for centuries. Now they hear the teaching of Jesus, they recognize its goodness—and its challenge—and they make a choice to live in a different way, even though it is costly. They have become apprentices, learning the ways of the Teacher.

Sometimes the choices are equally clear for us. One of the few directions Jesus gives about how we should relate to others in the church is this: “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.” (Matt 18:15) In other words, “Go to that person and see if you can work it out between you.” How church life might be different if we took that seriously! Our more usual response is to talk to everyone else *except* the person concerned, and the spreading talk (“Can you believe she said that?”) quickly becomes a poison in the bloodstream of the community. I’m sure you have seen it happen, and so have I.

I remember a good friend saying to me years ago, “John, you need to be careful of your sarcasm, or you’re really going to hurt someone.” Her words were not easy to receive, but I took them to heart, and have tried to be careful how I use my supposed “humour” ever since. She could have talked to other people instead: “That John Bowen: have you noticed how sarcastic he can be? Boy, he’s going to hurt someone one of these days.” And others would have agreed (or perhaps disagreed), and treated me differently, or whispered to me what she was saying—and things could have got nasty. But her direct and gentle approach meant the conversation was contained, the issue was dealt with immediately, and something positive was achieved in the Christian community.

Of course, the examples in our lives are not always so clear-cut. There may be times—when we hear about a situation of abuse, for instance—where the law requires that our first response is to call the authorities, not talk to the person. And

there isn't one particular Bible text to tell us what to do about environmental concerns, or space exploration, or genetically modified foods. To figure out an authentically Christian response to such issues requires study of lots of parts of the Bible (not just one), much consultation among Christians of different views, and lots of prayer. And even then there may well not be unanimity! But we need to make the effort if we want to be apprentices of Jesus.

### *Obedience as dying to live*

Sometimes these things will feel like a death (it's hard for some of us not to be sarcastic!), and indeed that is what they are: a death to the way we have done things previously, maybe for many years. But why are we surprised? Isn't that precisely what Jesus said discipleship would be like? "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:23-24) The cross Jesus speaks of is not something that happens to us against our will—disease or accident or loss—even though people often use the phrase that way. ("His weak heart is just a cross he has to bear.") Rather, it is something we deliberately choose (Jesus says "daily") every time we say Yes to his way and No to the alternative.

The encouragement (and it is good that there is one) is that this is actually the way to "save" our lives—to grow into that abundant life he speaks about in John's Gospel. In fact, *The Letter to the Hebrews* tells us that Jesus himself endured the suffering of the cross "for the sake of the joy that was set before

him." (Hebrews 12:2) The point was not the suffering itself (Jesus is no masochist) but that the suffering was the way to joy. Once again, Jesus teaches us, this time by example.

There will likely be at least one opportunity to obey Jesus in the rest of this very day. It may be a time when we can say yes to doing something good, or a time when we have the option of saying no to doing something not so good. Let's pray that we notice that opportunity when it comes, and that God gives us strength to obey. It's the way to new life.

Those then are four of the basic elements of discipleship—community, scripture, worship and obedience. But there is one more—and it is somewhat different.

## 5. The Invisible Helper

William Temple, once Archbishop of Canterbury, said something like this:

It's no good giving me a play like *Hamlet* or *King Lear* and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it; I can't. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like his.<sup>19</sup>

The work of shaping us in the life of the Kingdom is not something we can achieve by ourselves. Indeed, it is not something we would naturally be interested in—it is so counterin-

tuitive and demanding. The idea that we should be apprentices in the Kingdom is God's idea, conceived in love and mercy. And though Jesus is not present to train us as he did the first twelve, he is still present by his Spirit to do that same work—through community, scripture, worship and obedience. This is why Paul pointed out that the work of making us like Christ “comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18) Our job is to be responsive to our Trainer.

In some traditions, the term “spiritual formation” is used to emphasize this side of discipleship. Formation and discipleship are really the same thing—but each is a picture with a different emphasis. Discipleship puts the emphasis on Jesus' offer to teach—“Come to me ... learn from me” (Matthew 11:28-29)—and our response of commitment to learn from him. It's a two-sided thing.

The term “formation,” however, is different in that it puts the stress on something being done to us. *The Book of Jeremiah* gives a powerful image for this. God sends Jeremiah to a potter's workshop, where Jeremiah watches the potter at work. Then, says God, “Can't I do just as this potter does, people of Israel? ... Watch this potter. In the same way that this potter works his clay, I work on you, people of Israel.” (Jeremiah 18:6)

In this image, God has the power to shape us, and the only thing we have to do is stay still, be malleable in his hands, and allow the shaping to take place. The one thing we can do wrong is to resist—and, as the potter demonstrates, clay that refuses to respond to the potter's hands simply gets shaped into something else.

Now, like any analogy, it is not the whole truth: each image conveys its own aspect of the truth, whether we are thinking about formation or about discipleship. But—particularly in Western culture, where we like to believe we can do whatever we want to do—the story of the potter is a sobering reminder that we cannot in fact make ourselves into the person our Creator longs for us to be. Actually, this ought to be a relief to us, just as much as a challenge. Someone has paraphrased Dallas Willard as saying, “Jesus knows how to live your life better than you do.”<sup>20</sup> Our lives are far safer in the hands of our loving Creator, who knows our potential and our limitations far better than we do.

This means that the basic daily prayer of anyone who wants to be formed by God needs to be that of Mary when she was approached by the angel Gabriel to be told she would be the mother of Jesus: “I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say.” (Luke 1:38)

The Apostle Paul takes the same perspective for granted, and it underlies all his directions about what we should be doing to live as Christians. He says, for example: “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6) God has begun to work in us, and God is determined to complete that work. And, on the one occasion this idea of “formation” is found in the New Testament, he writes to the Galatians as “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is *formed* in you.” (Galatians 4:19)

And, to return to Temple's point—that it is the Holy Spirit who forms us to be like Christ—Paul himself underlines it in that verse I quoted earlier: “All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another; for *this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*” (2 Corinthians 3:18) As we try to be active disciples, let us not forget that ultimately it is all made possible by the work of God the Holy Spirit. That should keep us humble ... but at the same time it should give us great hope.

### 3. How Can We Create a Culture of Disciple-making?

Culture has been defined as “the way we do things round here.”<sup>21</sup> If discipleship is really important, then helping people grow as disciples needs to become a central part of every church's culture—part of the way the church “does things” in every area of life. Discipleship needs to become our “new normal.”

Which means, of course, that some of the old ways “we do things round here” will have to be replaced with different ways of “doing things.” Deep-rooted cultural change of this kind is tough. Old ways are resistant to change, whether for individuals or for communities. Old habits die hard—whether habits of thought, word, or deed. They are comfortable and familiar, like a pair of old shoes—and sometimes they simply confirm our old nature, rather than fostering a new and Christlike nature. So they are difficult to change.

How then might cultural change happen? There is no one-shot deal. The change has to be tackled on a number of different fronts.

#### (a) We need to talk about discipleship

- For a start, we need to become comfortable with talking about discipleship. It's as simple as that. Words like disciple, discipleship, making disciples, learning, following Jesus, apprenticeship and spiritual formation need to become the normal, everyday language of church.

- Leaders, whether ordained or lay, can help set the tone in this. If you are asked to “share a devotional thought” at the beginning of a meeting, choose something about discipleship. That shows it is important to you, but also familiarizes others with that way of talking. If you are asked to open or close a meeting with prayer, refer to discipleship: “Lord, thank you for calling us to follow you ...”; “Jesus, help us be sensitive to the teaching of your Spirit ...”
- If your church is formulating a Mission Statement, make sure it uses the ideas of discipleship. My own church worked on this a few years back, and came up with this: “God calls us to help people become followers of Jesus, equipped for ministry in the church and in the world through nurture, evangelism, worship and service.” There is the idea of being “followers of Jesus,” with a brief explanation of what that means.

Mission Statements do not change the world, of course, even though we might wish they did. But they can still provide a useful touchstone when new directions are proposed for a congregation. We can ask, “Does this idea help us fulfill our Mission Statement or does it send us off down a blind alley?” And that can help keep a church moving in the way of healthy discipleship.

- Of course, if you happen to be a preacher, preach discipleship. The five points I have written about above (community, scripture, prayer and worship, obedience, and the Holy Spirit) would make a good sermon series. And if you are preaching through the prescribed readings of the

lectionary, bear in mind the idea that the whole Bible is the story of people being trained in God’s school. It’s a pretty fruitful way to look at Scripture.

If you decide to do this, it means that, whatever the readings may be, there will be a connection to the Great Themes: God’s determination to renew all things, and to draw human beings into apprenticeship to that vision. Whether one is preaching Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Deborah, Micah, Ruth, Jonah, Peter, Mary, Timothy, or Philemon and Onesimus makes no difference. Every single one can be thought of, not just as a child of God or a servant of God, but also as a student of God, learning (often the hard way) to cooperate with the redemptive ways of God in the world.

### (b) We need to pick leaders who are disciples

I do not know a nice way to say this, so I will just say it: it is no use putting people into leadership positions in our congregations simply because they are (a) good organizers (b) popular personalities in the community or (c) major donors. The main qualification for leadership in a community which wants to produce disciples of Jesus is for the leaders to be disciples of Jesus themselves. It makes sense, doesn’t it? Only disciples can make disciples. Naturally, leaders need other gifts too, appropriate for the job they are to do, but their commitment to being disciples has to come first. It needs therefore to be the number one item in any job description: “Be a growing disciple of Jesus.”



### (c) We need to put money into disciple-making

If you want to know what a church considers most important, look at their budget. It speaks more truthfully than anything we say. For many churches, the biggest budget items are the salary (or salaries) of their ordained leaders, their music, the maintenance of their building, and (in some denominations) their contribution to denominational headquarters: those are their financial priorities.

But where does “making disciples” show up in our budget? Of course, it may not be called that. It may be a line item called “Youth group mission trip,” or “Neighbourhood outreach,” or “Materials for ESL class,” or “Small group leaders’ training materials.” Those are the things that tell us whether we are really serious about making disciples. Jesus says that where we allocate our “treasure” is a good indication of where our “heart” is. (Matthew 6:21)

This is a sobering angle from which to look at our church budget. How many of the lines are to do with keeping things ticking over just as they are? How many are to do with keeping the building in good shape? Not that these things are unimportant: they are the scaffolding inside which the work of growing disciples of Jesus can happen. Without the scaffolding, the building cannot go up. But the whole point of the scaffolding is the building! And one day, the scaffolding will be removed and the new building be displayed in all its glory. Let’s remember which is the means, and which is the end.

### (d) We need to affirm disciple-making in public

We do not always realize how important the things are that we say in our services, but which are not part of the formal structure of the service: a friendly welcome at the beginning, words of guidance for newcomers as the service unfolds (announcing page numbers, or when to stand and sit), what is said about a children’s program, and even the announcements. In some ways, these things communicate our priorities even more clearly than the more traditional parts of the service.

In our own church, for instance, our contemporary service begins with a welcome and brief explanation from the “host” for the day. Often, one of the things the host will say is, “At St John’s we are a community of ordinary people learning to follow Jesus.”<sup>22</sup> It’s a very simple thing, but it means that right from the beginning of the service, discipleship is front and centre: this is who we are, this is why we are here.

How about the things that are highlighted in our announcements? I remember visiting one church where the very first thing in the service was a statement from the church treasurer that the church was deeply in the red. Not very inspiring—but it told a visitor like me a lot about the state (and the priorities) of the church.

If making disciples is a priority of our church, let’s honour every attempt to do so. If the young people go on a mission trip—which is, after all, one way they learn to be Jesus’ apprentices—their reports should be front and centre when they



come back. If people attend a conference on discipleship, make sure they have a chance to share afterwards about how it is affecting their lives. In some churches, sermon time during Lent is given over to different lay people who tell the story of what it means to them to be a student of Jesus.

All these are ways of helping shift the culture of a church to becoming one of disciple-making. It is often a slow process—it could easily take three years—but the rewards in terms of the focus and effectiveness of the church in pursuing its God-given mission cannot be measured.

## 4. How Are We Doing in Discipleship?

Here are some questions to ponder to help us think about our own discipleship, using the outline of the five points above. You can do this by yourself, of course, but there is much to be gained from doing it with a trusted friend who has also been reading this booklet, or in a group setting where everybody has been thinking about these questions. After all, as we have seen, the life of discipleship is a community venture.

The first five sets of questions follow the five main points of this booklet. Please don't think that these questions are meant to be a guilt trip, a way of driving home what bad disciples we are. Most of us are perfectly well aware of our shortcomings without any help! And in any case, Jesus promises that he is a Teacher who is "gentle and humble in heart." (Matthew 11:30) There is always forgiveness for the times we blow it. There is always grace and strength when we need it. (Hebrews 4:16)

So, as you read these questions, be gentle with yourself: Jesus is. There may well be some encouragements in the list: "Well, at least I've made a start on that one." Other things may strike you as within reach, if you had a little help. In all likelihood, Jesus the Teacher is asking you to work on one item, or maybe two—not a dozen. That is setting yourself up for failure. Start as soon as you can with one or two, and others will follow later.

## 1. Community

- Am I committed to a church where I know people, and they know me? Or where we are at least beginning to get to know one another? If I have no such community, where might I find one? Solitary discipleship is an oxymoron.
- Are there people with whom I talk about faith on a regular basis? If not, are there people in my church community with whom I can imagine beginning to talk openly about faith?
- Are there people I work with in my faith community—in the choir, at the food bank, in the Sunday School—where there is the potential for us to encourage one another in our discipleship?
- Could I start such a group, or support someone else who could start such a group?

## 2. Scripture

- Do I read and think about the Bible regularly?
- Do I understand the Big Story of scripture—that it is about the work of God putting to rights all that is wrong in the world, and doing that through Jesus Christ?
- Do I have resources to turn to when I have questions about the Bible—books or websites I can consult, or people I can talk to?

- Do I have a place—perhaps the group where I can talk about faith—where I can study the Bible with others?
- Do I know some resources that would help me get a better grasp of the Bible? Or someone who could help me find them?

## 3. Prayer and worship

- Do I manage to pray each day—at set times and spontaneously, through the day?
- Do I join with other disciples for worship, especially at communion, on a regular basis?
- Do I try and take quiet days once or twice a year?
- Do I keep a journal of challenges and encouragements in my discipleship?
- Do I try to read books which encourage me in my discipleship?

## 4. Obedience

- As I review my daily life, do I find that I notice some of the places where God might be trying to teach me to do some things differently—relationships I am in, problems I face, things that challenge and stretch me?
- Am I aware of places in my life where I find it difficult to be obedient to Jesus—where I really don't want to forgive, or to be generous, or to go the second mile?

- Am I aware of times in my day when I have to choose whether to obey Jesus or do something different? (Remember: There are no straight A students in this school! The point is to try.)

## 5. The Holy Spirit

- Do I have some understanding of the role of the Spirit to make me like Jesus?
- Can I think of times when I have felt the Holy Spirit helping me to follow Jesus?
- Can I think of times when I have felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit to do something, and ignored it? (We have all done it. There is always forgiveness and another chance.)
- Do I regularly ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

There are three other areas worth considering:

## 6. Models of discipleship

- Who have been my models over the years for following Jesus? Make a list.
- Can I name some of the specific lessons I learned from them? Obviously they are and were not perfect. Paul says, “Be imitators of me *as I am of Christ*”—perhaps implying, “And please don’t imitate me in other ways!” But there are still lots of Christ-like things that we can learn—and have learned—from our role-models in the faith.

- Are there some areas of discipleship where I have never had a role-model—but I could really use one? Is there someone I think of as a good example in some area of discipleship and from whom I could learn?

## 7. What do you need in your discipleship?

- Have you ever been aware of responding personally to Jesus’ call to discipleship? Sad to say, many people attend church for years without realizing the importance of being an apprentice of Jesus. One bishop I know was told very indignantly by a faithful churchgoer, “I am *not* a disciple: I’m a *member!*” Deciding to be a disciple is obviously the place to begin. (There is a prayer below which may help to focus this issue.)
- Would you say, having thought about the different categories, that you are strongest in the area of community, scripture, prayer and worship, obedience, or relying on the Holy Spirit? (To give a positive answer to any of these is not pride: merely a reason to be grateful to God for doing that work in you.) How can you build on those strengths?
- Would you say you are weakest in the area of community, scripture, prayer and worship, obedience, or relying on the Holy Spirit? What would help you move ahead in that area?
- Is there someone you can talk to about these questions, someone you can ask to pray for you or even with you?

## 8. How could you encourage someone else in their discipleship?

- Can you think of someone who is newer to faith than you are? If you have been following Jesus for as little as three months, you can be helpful to someone who has been following Jesus for a week! And of course, one of the things we learn to do as disciples of Jesus—as he told his first apprentices—is to help others become disciples.
- What are some specific ways you could encourage them in their discipleship? That is, how might you encourage them in their involvement in the Christian community, in knowing Scripture, in prayer and worship, in following Jesus in everyday life, and in trusting the Holy Spirit? A half hour chat over coffee would be a great start.
- Can you pray for them to grow in their discipleship?

## 5. One Final Word ... Joy!

I was meeting once with a group of young people who were curious about Christian faith. In one of our early discussions, I asked them, “What do you think is the heart of Christian faith?” (They had Christian friends, and they had talked about faith.) One said, “Oh, it’s all about accepting-Jesus-Christ-as-your-Lord-and-Saviour.” (He made it sound almost like a single word.) Another one said, “Well, we’re all sinners, but Jesus died for our sin, so if we confess our sins, we’ll be forgiven.” But it was said in a very matter-of-fact, bored kind of way. A third said, “Well, it’s all about worshipping God. Though quite why God needs to be worshipped, I really don’t know.” None of them sounded very excited about what they had heard. None of them seemed to have heard it as “good news.”

Then they turned and asked me, “So what do you think Christianity is all about?” Of course, I had had a chance to think about this beforehand! So I said, “Actually, I think it’s all about joy. God loves us and wants to fill the world with joy. But every day, you and I do things to mess up God’s plan, so that the world is not filled with joy. But God says, If you follow Jesus, I will begin to fill your life with joy, and through you the whole world.”

There was a silence, and then one said, “I’ve never heard that before.” Another one said, “I kinda like it.”

I kinda like it too. As we think about our own commitment to be apprentices of Jesus, let’s keep this in mind. Discipleship is not about being “good” in order to be rewarded

in heaven if we happen to be good enough. Neither is it about being religious, and being inside a church building as often as possible. It's all about joy. It's about God's invitation to human beings to work with him in restoring joy to the world. There is no higher calling for any human being. This is where we find our centre, our future, and our wholeness. This is what we were made for. What else is worth living for?

## The Prayer of a Disciple

Lord Jesus, thank you for offering  
yourself to be my teacher.

Thank you for showing me how  
to live in the ways of your Kingdom.

Please make me your disciple,  
your apprentice, today.

Search out my faults and weaknesses,  
and enable me to overcome them.

Draw out my gifts and strengths,  
and refine them for your service.

You have said you are a teacher  
who is "humble and gentle in heart,"

so be patient with my slowness  
and my stubbornness.

Please fill me with your Holy Spirit.

And thank you for your promise  
that you will bring your work in me  
to completion at the Last Day.

Amen.

## Notes

1. I have been very much influenced in this understanding of discipleship by Robert Brow, *Go Make Learners: A New Model for Discipleship in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1981). The book is now available free online at <http://www.brow.on.ca/Books/Learners/LearnersIntro.html>.
2. "Jesus was ... the master craftsman whom [the disciples] were to follow and imitate. Discipleship was ... apprenticeship to the work of the Kingdom." T.W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1945), quoted by Michael Griffiths, *The Example of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 48.
3. Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Man Born To Be King* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943), 187.
4. *Ibid.*, 183.
5. John R.W. Stott, *Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 114.
6. For example, Isaiah 60:3.
7. "The whole Torah from Genesis to Deuteronomy was interpreted as a divine summons to Israel to imitate God." E.J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ* (1960), quoted by Michael Griffiths, *The Example of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 29.
8. See, for example, Leah and Markku Kostamo, "Creation Care as Christian Mission," in John P. Bowen (ed.), *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 167-179.
9. [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How\\_long\\_does\\_it\\_take\\_to\\_become\\_a\\_qualified\\_plumber](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_long_does_it_take_to_become_a_qualified_plumber) [accessed June 22, 2013].
10. Eugene Peterson used this as the title of his book on discipleship, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980).
11. Luke 15:4-7.
12. John P. Bowen, *Growing Up Christian: Why Young People Stay in Church, Leave Church and (Sometimes) Come Back to Church* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010), 43-45.
13. Quoted in Mary Purcell, *The First Jesuit: Saint Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Image Books, 1965), 110.
14. Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 54.
15. Diana Hartman, "Life's Lie: You Can Be Anything You Want to Be," January 16, 2008. <http://blogcritics.org/culture/article/lifes-lie-you-can-be-anything/> [accessed June 22, 2013].
16. See [www.e100challenge.ca](http://www.e100challenge.ca).
17. C.S. Lewis, *Prayer: Letters to Malcolm* (1964; London: Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 62.
18. The story is told in John Bowen, ed., *The Missionary Letters of Vincent Donovan 1957-1973* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 214.
19. Paraphrased in John R.W. Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of our Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 37.
20. The closest I have found to this wording in Willard's books is: "I am learning from Jesus to live my life as he would live my life if he were I." Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 283.

21. Derek Worlock, quoted in Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 12.

22. This is something we learned from Harold Percy at Trinity Anglican Church, Streetsville, ON. Fortunately, there is no copyright on it.