



GCI *Buzz*

Healthy
Church:

What is

Discipleship?



Di·sci·ple·ship

/di' sī pəl ship/

Noun

the lifelong journey of following Jesus, being formed by him, and participating with him in his mission.

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship is not just about learning more information — it's about transformation. At its core, discipleship is a relationship with Jesus where we are continually growing in faith, shaped by his love, and learning to live like him in the world. It involves both personal spiritual growth and participation in community, as we follow Jesus together.

Jesus invites us not simply to believe in him but to follow him — to walk with him daily, becoming more like him in our thoughts, actions, and love for others (Luke 9:23).

Discipleship Is a Journey of Transformation

03

Much like physical growth, spiritual growth happens in stages. Discipleship begins with Jesus at the center. It is not about reaching a destination quickly but about allowing Christ to shape every part of our lives.

Our relationship with God deepens over time. From an initial awakening to faith, discipleship grows as we continue to respond to God's love and grace. We move through times of learning, serving, and questioning, all while living in union with Christ.

Discipleship is not a solo endeavor — it happens best in community where we learn together, serve together, and are formed by the Spirit together.

Discipleship Means Sharing Life with Jesus

04

Jesus' invitation to "Come, follow me" is more than a command — it's a call to a way of life. We learn from Jesus through what he said. We also learn from how he lived: in humility, compassion, obedience to the Father, and with love for others.

Discipleship is:

- **Relational:** rooted in God's love and shared with others.
- **Formational:** shaping our thoughts, values, and behaviors into Christlikeness.
- **Missional:** actively participating in God's work in the world.

We are not only recipients of grace, but we are also vessels of it, called to reflect Jesus in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

How Discipleship Affects Our Lives

When we commit to following Jesus, our lives change. Discipleship leads us to love more deeply, serve more humbly, and forgive more freely. Our choices begin to reflect the heart of God. It affects how we spend our time, how we treat others, and how we engage in the mission of the church.

Discipleship is not about doing more church activities. It's about living into the fullness of Christ. Because Jesus is with us everywhere, this means we can be discipled at home, at work, and even in the everyday rhythms of life.

Biblical Examples of Discipleship in Action

Discipleship isn't just a concept. We see it lived out through the stories and relationships we see throughout Scripture. Here are three powerful examples of discipleship in action:

- **Jesus and the Twelve Disciples** (Matthew 4:18–22)

Jesus called ordinary people — fishermen, tax collectors — to follow him. He lived with them, taught them, and trained them to carry out his mission. This relationship-based model of discipleship remains central to how we follow him today.

- **Paul and Timothy** (2 Timothy 2:1–2)

Paul invested in Timothy's spiritual growth, encouraging him, praying for him, and equipping him to lead others. This passing on of faith across generations shows how discipleship is both personal and multiplying.

- **Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos** (Acts 18:24–26)

This couple noticed Apollos' potential and gently guided him into a fuller understanding of the gospel. Their quiet, faithful mentoring shows how discipleship can happen in everyday conversations and hospitality.

These examples show that discipleship happens in real relationships where faith is shared, nurtured, and multiplied.

Next Steps on the Pathway of Discipleship

Belong. Believe. Become.

Discipleship is a journey, and every journey has a starting point. In GCI, we describe this journey using three simple words that reflect how people grow in Christ-centered community:

- **Belong**

We begin by experiencing the love and welcome of God through authentic community. Everyone is invited to the table. In Christ, we already belong — before we believe or change anything. As we worship, share life together, and serve side by side, we reflect the inclusive love of Jesus.

• Believe

08

As we experience God's love, we are drawn to trust Jesus. Belief grows in a relationship — not just through information, but through encounter. We explore Scripture, ask questions, and come to see Jesus as the center of our faith. He is the one who reveals who God is and who we are.

• Become

Discipleship leads to transformation. As we continue to walk with Jesus, the Spirit shapes us to become more like him — growing in love, wisdom, and participation in his mission. We're invited to join Jesus in what he's doing in the world, living as ambassadors of his grace.

This model reminds us that discipleship is not a checklist. It's a relational journey guided by grace, grounded in Christ, and shared with others.

Conclusion

9

Discipleship is the heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. **It's a lifelong journey** of walking with him, being formed by him, and **participating in his mission** of love and reconciliation.

As we grow as disciples, we help form healthy churches — communities of grace where others can also be invited to follow Jesus.

Let us continue to center our lives on Jesus, walk the journey together, and invite others to come along.

References

1. "The Need for Discipleship," *Equipper, Grace Communion International*. <https://equipper.gci.org/2020/12/the-need-for-discipleship>
2. "Stages of Faith," *GCI Resource*. <https://resources.gci.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-CH5-Stages-of-Faith.pdf>
3. "Discipleship 101," *Grace Communion International*. <https://www.gci.org/files/Discipleship%20101%202016.pdf>
4. *EW Strawser, Centering Discipleship*