



AN 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY FOR WOMEN



Laurie Cole



are you a  
DISCIPLE?

SAYING YES TO A LIFE  
BEYOND CASUAL CHRISTIANITY

AN 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY FOR WOMEN



Laurie Cole

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## *Dedication*

This study is dedicated to Pam Henderson, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, a modern-day Priscilla (Acts 18), and my beloved co-worker in ministry. Her wisdom, counsel, generosity, and godly example are an inspiration to Priority Ministries and to all who are privileged to know her—including and especially me. I love you, Pam.



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## About the Study

This Bible study is a simple tool to help you discover life-changing truths from God's Word. Think of this workbook as a chisel and your Bible as a gold mine. Each day you'll "dig-in" to God's Word to discover precious treasures that will enrich your life for His glory (Psalm 19:9-10, 119:162). Homework for this study will require approximately 30 minutes per day, five days per week.

A good translation of the Bible will be essential as you use this study. The *New Living Translation*, Second Edition, the *New International Version*, the *New American Standard Bible*, the *New King James Version*, or the *King James Version* are all very accurate translations and are highly recommended. In this study, the author will primarily use the *New Living Translation*.





## About the Author



Laurie Cole is the Founder and President of Priority Ministries, a ministry dedicated to encouraging and equipping women to love God most and seek Him first. Raised in a strong Christian home, Laurie became a Christian at an early age. But in her early twenties, God tested and taught her the importance of truly giving Him priority in her life.

In 1985, Laurie enrolled in an in-depth women's Bible study. Encouraged by the older women who led the study, Laurie received training and began teaching and leading a group where God affirmed His call upon her life to teach. For over 25 years, Laurie has taught dozens of Bible studies, spoken at numerous women's events and conferences, and is the author of five other Bible studies: *There Is a Season*, *The Temple*, *Beauty by The Book*, *Beauty by The Book for Teens*, and *Warrior Princess*. Her passion for God and hunger for His Word continues to grow.

A minister's wife, Laurie and her husband, Bill, serve the Lord at Sagemont Church in Houston, Texas, where he is the Associate Pastor of Worship and Praise. They have been married for 37 years and have three sons (David, Kevin, and J.J.), two beloved daughters-in-law (Stephanie and Rachael), and three glorious grandchildren (Ezra, Juliette, and Caroline).



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*are you a* DISCIPLE?



# Are you a Disciple: Goal & Purpose

## 3 Groups & 3 Goals

**Group 1:** Those of you who \_\_\_\_\_.

**Goal:** That you will become a \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_.

**Group 2:** Those of you who are on your way to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Goal:** That you will choose to \_\_\_\_\_ no matter \_\_\_\_\_.

**Group 3:** Those of you who will have the opportunity to become a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Goal:** That you will choose to become a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

## \_\_\_\_\_ : A Role Model for All 3 Groups

1. She chose to \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_. *Acts 18:1-3*

2. She chose to \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_. *Acts 18:4-6, 18-19*

3. She was a \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_. *Acts 18:24-26, Romans 16:3-5*

*2 Timothy 4:19*

*are you a* DISCIPLE?





## BACK STORIES & YOUR STORY

*If we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and partings will it demand? To answer this question we shall have to go to [Christ], for only he knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him knows the journey's end. But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy.*

—Deitrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*<sup>1</sup>

*are you a* DISCIPLE?

## MY BACK STORY:

I became a Christian when I was just a child. Long before I could ever read or write, my parents taught me about God, Jesus, sin, salvation, and a whole host of Bible stories and songs. Secure in God's love and theirs, I placed my faith in Christ at the tender age of six.

I became a disciple when I was in my twenties. My marriage was unraveling. My world was falling apart. But in the great, big middle of that very insecure season, God drove me to my knees and drew me to Himself. And that's when I became a disciple.

What you've just read is my spiritual back story—a synopsis of my 50-year relationship with God.

Are you a Christian? If so, then are you a disciple? And if, perhaps, you're a little uncertain about what that second question means or how to answer it, don't worry. This week's homework will help you.

Please do not think, however, that I have forgotten about the first question: Are you a Christian? That, too, will be a very important part of this week's lesson because:

**You cannot be a disciple until you first become a Christian.**

And take it from someone whose world almost fell apart, Jesus wants you to be *both*.

## *day 1:* JESUS' BACK STORY

"In the beginning." Two books of the Bible (Genesis and the Gospel of John) begin with those three words.

Genesis reveals the beginning—the back story—of creation, the world, and mankind, but John's Gospel takes us even further back. It opens the curtain to eternity past and allows us to see the beginning—the back story—of the Word, Jesus Christ.

John's Gospel also reveals the back stories of Jesus' disciples. And if this were the first draft of this week's homework, I'd be introducing them to you right about now. But I never had peace about that first draft (or the second or even the third). Now I know why.

The first and foremost person you need to meet on this very first day of the very first week of your study isn't the disciples. It's the One the disciples followed: Jesus.

So, pick up your Bible and prepare to be awestruck as we begin "in the beginning."



1. Discover the divine back story of Jesus Christ by reading John 1:1-18. If this passage is familiar territory for you, I beg you not to rush through it. Take your time. Take it in.

**NOTE:** The "Word" in this passage is Jesus.

### John 1:1-18

- <sup>1</sup> *In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- <sup>2</sup> *He existed in the beginning with God.*
- <sup>3</sup> *God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.*
- <sup>4</sup> *The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.*
- <sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*
- <sup>6</sup> *God sent a man, John the Baptist,*
- <sup>7</sup> *to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.*
- <sup>8</sup> *John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.*
- <sup>9</sup> *The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*
- <sup>10</sup> *He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.*
- <sup>11</sup> *He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.*
- <sup>12</sup> *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.*
- <sup>13</sup> *They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.*
- <sup>14</sup> *So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*
- <sup>15</sup> *John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"*
- <sup>16</sup> *From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.*
- <sup>17</sup> *For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.*
- <sup>18</sup> *No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.*



*are you a* DISCIPLE?

2. Using words from the text as much as possible, answer the following questions about Jesus' back story:
  - a. When did Jesus' back story begin (v. 1)?
  - b. What did you learn about Jesus' history and relationship to God (vs. 1-3)?
  - c. How did Jesus affect everything and everyone including the darkness (vs. 4-5)?
  - d. What happened to Jesus, and how did others respond to Him (vs. 9-12, 14a)?
  - e. How are Jesus and God alike (vs. 14b, 17-18)?
  - f. How are Jesus and God different (vs. 14, 18)?
3. As you read earlier, both Genesis and John start with the same three words: "in the beginning." But their similarities don't end there. Discover how Genesis reinforces and expands our understanding of God by studying a few key passages:
  - a. Read Genesis 1:1-2 and explain how it reinforces John 1:1-5.

- b. John 1 reveals that Jesus was with God in the beginning. But according to Genesis 1:2, who else was there?
  - c. Read Genesis 1:26 and explain who “us” specifically is.
4. All throughout history, countless individuals (including Mohammed, Buddha, L. Ron Hubbard, etc.) have established countless religions (including Islam, Buddhism, Scientology, etc.). According to what you’ve studied today, what makes Jesus and Christianity unique from them all?

When Jesus came into the world, three different groups of people responded to Him in three distinct ways:

- 1) The world who didn’t recognize Him (v. 10).
- 2) The Jews (His people) who rejected Him (v. 11).
- 3) The children of God who believed and accepted Him (v. 12).

These same three groups and responses remain true even today. But by believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can be part of that third group—the children of God.

So, what exactly is “the gospel”? The Apostle Paul calls it the “Good News,” and he defines it in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

*Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News...that saves you... [that] Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.*

—1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Very simply, the gospel is the Good News that Jesus died for our sins, was buried in the tomb, and rose from the dead so that we, too, may receive salvation and eternal life through Him.

are you a DISCIPLE?

The Apostle John described God's purpose in sending Jesus in the most well-known scripture of all time:

*"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

—John 3:16

Believing in Jesus means that we trust, commit, and place our faith in Him. In John 1:12, "believe" is used alongside the word "accept" (or "receive" in many translations). Believing in Jesus and receiving salvation go hand-in-hand. By placing our faith in Jesus, we receive salvation and the forgiveness of our sins.

Remember the question that I said I would not forget? It is The Most Important Question of this entire study, and now it's time for you to answer it: *Are you a Christian?*

5. Please answer that question by checking one of the following boxes:

- Yes, I am a Christian. I placed my faith in Jesus some time ago, and I have already taken the first essential step to become a disciple.
- Yes, today I am placing my faith in Jesus and receiving the gift of salvation. By becoming a Christian, I am also taking the first essential step to become a disciple.
- No, I cannot say that I am ready to place my faith in Christ and become a Christian today. But I do want to know more, and I will continue this study with an open heart.

*reflect*

6. You've just spent the very first day of the very first week of this study in the very best way possible by getting to know Jesus (perhaps, for the very first time). Communicate with Him now by completing this one-sentence prayer:

*Dear Jesus, in a world where most people still don't recognize you for who you really are, thank you for showing me today that...*

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## day 2: BACK STORIES OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES: PART 1

Hello, my name is Laurie and I'm nosy.

For instance, when I'm having lunch with someone I don't know very well, I put on my "Oprah hat" (discreetly, of course) and interview them. I want to hear their story. I want to know what makes them tick. I want to learn about them and from them. My goal is to leave that lunch with a deeper understanding of who they really, *really* are. So should you ever find yourself across a table from me, consider yourself warned.

Today, I want you to get to know Jesus' very first disciples. You may already be familiar with some or all of them, but please approach today's study as if your knowledge of them is nil. Your goal: to conclude today's lesson with a deeper understanding of who the disciples really, *really* were. Enjoy a nice, nosy day in God's Word.



1. Discover the back stories of Jesus' first disciples by reading John 1:15-51.

**NOTE:** In this passage, John refers to John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of Jesus who announced Jesus' coming (John 1:6-8, 23). But John the Baptist is not the author of The Gospel of John. The author of this book is John, the disciple of Jesus, the son of Zebedee, also known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20-25). He also authored 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and The Revelation.

### John 1:15-51

- <sup>15</sup> *John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"*
- <sup>16</sup> *From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.*
- <sup>17</sup> *For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.*
- <sup>18</sup> *No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.*
- <sup>19</sup> *This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?"*
- <sup>20</sup> *He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."*
- <sup>21</sup> *"Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No," he replied. "Are you the Prophet we are expecting?" "No."*
- <sup>22</sup> *"Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"*

—continued next page

**John 1:15-51** (continued)

- <sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"
- <sup>24</sup> Then the Pharisees who had been sent
- <sup>25</sup> asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"
- <sup>26</sup> John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize.
- <sup>27</sup> Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."
- <sup>28</sup> This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.
- <sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
- <sup>30</sup> He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'
- <sup>31</sup> I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."
- <sup>32</sup> Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him.
- <sup>33</sup> I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'
- <sup>34</sup> I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God."
- <sup>35</sup> The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples.
- <sup>36</sup> As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!"
- <sup>37</sup> When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.
- <sup>38</sup> Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"
- <sup>39</sup> "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.
- <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus.
- <sup>41</sup> Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").
- <sup>42</sup> Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").
- <sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me."
- <sup>44</sup> Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.
- <sup>45</sup> Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."
- <sup>46</sup> "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.
- <sup>47</sup> As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."
- <sup>48</sup> "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

—continued next page

<sup>49</sup> *"Then Nathanael exclaimed, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!'"*

<sup>50</sup> *Jesus asked him, 'Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.'*

<sup>51</sup> *Then he said, 'I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.'*

2. How did the very first disciples meet Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Before becoming disciples of Jesus, who did some of the disciples follow (v. 35), and what does this reveal about them spiritually?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Before meeting Jesus, what did the first disciples already know about Him? Read the following passages, and record what John the Baptist would have already taught them about Jesus. Also, please take time to read a few verses before and after each passage to enhance your understanding of the context.
  - a. John 1:15-18
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. John 1:26-27
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. John 1:29
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. John 1:30-36



5. You just read John's account of the baptism of Christ (John 1:31-34). It is important to note that all four of The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—include the story of Jesus' baptism. Discover the significance of baptism and get to know the disciples a little more by reading Luke 3:3 and answering the questions that follow.

*Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River,  
preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned to God  
to receive forgiveness for their sins.*

—Luke 3.3

- a. What did John the Baptist teach about baptism and its significance?

- b. Think about this: would John's disciples have been baptized?  
Circle your answer.

Yes      No      I'm not sure

- c. Explain your answer to question "b."

- d. Why was Jesus, the sinless Son of God, baptized? What did His baptism reveal and prove?  
Review John 1:31-34 to answer this question.

Let's pause for a few paragraphs to ponder Jesus' baptism.

Before He began His public ministry, before a single disciple ever followed Him, before preaching His first sermon or performing His first miracle, Jesus was baptized. The same One who was "in the beginning...with God...and...[who] was God" (John 1:1 NASB) left His hometown of Nazareth one day and set out for the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

The baptism of Christ reveals a beautiful principle to every potential disciple: baptism was a priority to Jesus—even over ministry and service to others. Therefore, if you desire to follow Christ and be His disciple, you should also follow Him in baptism. And the sooner the better. His priorities should be your priorities.

One final point about baptism: salvation is essential for baptism, but baptism is not essential for salvation. The best example of this would be the thief who received salvation as he hung on the cross next to Jesus and to whom Jesus promised, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). That thief, however, did not have the opportunity to be baptized. We do.

6. Who were Jesus' first disciples? What were their names, and what common ties did they share (John 1:35-47)?

**NOTE:** Many theologians believe the unnamed disciple in this passage is John, the author of this book (not John the Baptist).

7. Read the following verses, and record how the first disciples described Jesus:

a. John 1:38: \_\_\_\_\_

b. John 1:41: \_\_\_\_\_

c. John 1:45: \_\_\_\_\_

d. John 1:49: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice the chain reaction in John 1:35-51? It begins when John the Baptist directs two of his disciples to follow Jesus. It continues when one of those men finds his brother and brings Him to Christ. Then Jesus reaches out to Philip and invites him to, "Follow Me" (John 1:43). The chain reaction concludes as Philip finds Nathanael and brings him to Christ.

These five men—Andrew, John, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—were the very first disciples. The chain reaction that led them to Christ continues today. And you are part of it.



reflect

8. As you reflect upon your own life, who did God use to direct and bring you to Jesus? Even more importantly, who does God want you to bring to Christ? Write these names in the space provided. Conclude your time of reflection by thanking God for those He used to bring you to Christ and by praying for those He wants you to reach.

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### day 3: WHY FOLLOW JESUS?

The title of this study is actually a question: Are you a disciple? Answering that question is one of the primary objectives of this study. But that is not the question you will be dealing with today. This is:

#### **Why do you want to become a disciple of Jesus?**

It's a nosy question, and it strikes at the very heart of our motives for following Christ. But nosy me isn't the one who is asking. Jesus is. In fact, the very first recorded words of Christ in John's Gospel are, basically, that very question:

*Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them.*

—John 1:38

Jesus wanted those first disciples to tell Him why they were following Him. But the disciples ducked His question with a question of their own: "Where are you staying?" (John 1:38). Without prodding or pressing them to answer His question, Jesus simply replied, "Come and see" (John 1:39).

Why did Jesus ask such a blunt, pointed question in the first place? After all, He already knew everything within their hearts including every word they were about to speak (Luke 9:47). So why did He even ask? And for that matter, why does He ever ask us anything?

He asks because we need to answer. He asks because we need to examine our hearts and motives. He asks because He wants us to confess what we too often suppress. And above all, He asks because He longs to lavish His love, mercy, and grace upon us.

Why do you want to become a disciple? Why follow Jesus? Allow Jesus to show you the answers to those questions for Himself today. All you need to do is “come and see” (John 1:39).



1. Yesterday you met Nathanael. Review his first encounter with Christ by reading John 1:47-51 and answering the questions that follow:

**John 1:47-51**

<sup>47</sup> *As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.”*

<sup>48</sup> *“How do you know about me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”*

<sup>49</sup> *Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”*

<sup>50</sup> *Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.”*

<sup>51</sup> *Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”*

- a. What question did Jesus ask, and what promises did He make to Nathanael (v. 50-51)?

Question (v. 50a):

Promise # 1 (v. 50b):

Promise # 2 (v. 51):

- b. How did Jesus describe Himself to Nathanael? Fill in the blanks:

“The Son of Man, the one who is the \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.”

*are you a* DISCIPLE?

2. Three years after His first encounter with Nathanael, Jesus met with His disciples for a final supper and prepared them for His arrest and crucifixion. Read this account from John 14:1-6 using your own Bible, then answer the following questions:

a. What did Jesus say the disciples already knew (v. 4)?

“You know \_\_\_\_\_ to where I am going.”

b. How did Thomas respond to Jesus? What question did he ask (v. 5b)?

“How can we know \_\_\_\_\_?”

c. How did Jesus answer Thomas (v. 6a)?

“I am \_\_\_\_\_.”

d. In Acts 1:9-10, Jesus fulfilled His promises to both Nathanael (John 1:50) and Thomas (John 14:6). Read Acts 1:9-10, and describe how He did it.

e. According to John 1:51, John 14:6, and Acts 1:9-10, why follow Jesus?

3. The small band of disciples had only been following Jesus for three days when they witnessed something very significant. Discover what it was by reading John 2:1-11, then answer the questions that follow:

a. What did the disciples see Jesus do firsthand?

b. What was the significance of what Jesus did (v. 11)?

c. How did it affect the disciples (v. 11)?

d. According to John 1, the disciples already believed Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. So, what happened to their new-found faith in Christ in John 2:11?

4. Jesus' first miracle led to many, many others. "Come and see" (John 1:39) a few more. Read the following passages and describe briefly the miracles Jesus performed:
  - a. Luke 8:22-25
  - b. Luke 8:26-37
  - c. Luke 8:40-56
  
5. According to the passages you've just studied in Questions 3 and 4, why follow Jesus?
  
6. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and promises of the Messiah. "Come and see" (John 1:39) some of them by reading the following passages and recording a brief description of how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy:

**NOTE:** In some (but not all) Bible translations, scriptures from the Old Testament *may* be capitalized or indented when they are quoted in the New Testament.

  - a. Matthew 11:1-6 / Isaiah 35:4-6, 61:1
  - b. Matthew 13:33-35 / Psalm 78:2
  - c. Matthew 21:1-5 / Zechariah 9:9
  - d. Matthew 27:34-50 / Psalm 22:6-8, 11-18 (Keep in mind that Psalm 22 was written hundreds of years before Christ came and hundreds of years before crucifixions ever took place.)



7. According to the passages you've just studied in Question 6, why follow Jesus?

*reflect*

8. What have you seen Jesus do in your own life? Describe one or two of the most significant ways He has proven to you that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).



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## *day 4:* BACK STORIES OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES: PART 2

How did the disciples become disciples? That's the #1 Question nosy me wanted to know before I started writing this study. Who were they, and what were they like before they became the Apostles—the pillars and leaders of the Christian faith?

Today, as you continue studying the back stories of the disciples, my hope is that you will not only gain a deeper understanding of who they were, but that you will also see how much you have in common.

P.S. Yesterday's homework was longer than usual, so today's will be shorter. (You're welcome.)



1. You met Jesus' first disciples in John 1-2. After following Jesus to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (John 2:13-17, 3:22, 4:1-8), the disciples returned to their hometown near the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus went to Nazareth, His hometown (Luke 4).

The reunion between Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James, and John is recorded in the following passages. Read each passage, then record:

- The key details of their reunion.
- Jesus' call and their responses.
- Your own personal and spiritual insights.

**NOTE:** You will notice that these three accounts are somewhat different. However, most scholars believe they are parallel accounts of the same story as told by three different men with three different perspectives.

a. Matthew 4:18-22

b. Mark 1:16-20

c. Luke 5:1-11



*are you a* DISCIPLE?

2. Conclude your homework today by answering a few key questions about the account you just read from Luke 5.
  - a. What were the results of Peter's first fishing trip (v. 5)?
  - b. How did Peter address Jesus prior to his second fishing trip (v. 5)?
  - c. What did Peter do and confess after the second fishing trip (v. 8)?
  - d. How did Peter address Jesus after the second fishing trip (v. 8), and how does this differ from the way he previously addressed Jesus in verse 5?
  - e. How did Jesus reply to Peter's confession, and what does this reveal about Jesus (v. 10)?

*reflect*

3. Have you had a Luke 5:8 experience recently? Describe it (briefly) in the space below. If you haven't confessed it to Jesus yet, do that now. Finally, write a one or two sentence prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus, the One who forgives sinners and gives them a future and a hope.

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## day 5: BACK STORIES OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES: PART 3

You have already met five of the disciples, and today you will meet the remaining seven. But these twelve men weren't the only disciples. There were many others, many of whom were women! (We have Luke to thank for providing us with some wonderful details about them.)

As you complete today's study, there are three questions you need to consider:

- 1) Who did Jesus call to become His disciple?
- 2) Who does Jesus call to become His disciple today?

And, of course:

- 3) Are you a disciple?

Enjoy some sweet time in God's Word!



1. Read Luke 5:27-32 and meet the disciple "Levi", aka "Matthew." Then answer the questions that follow.

### Luke 5:27-32

<sup>27</sup> *Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him.*

<sup>28</sup> *So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.*

<sup>29</sup> *Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them.*

<sup>30</sup> *But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?"*

<sup>31</sup> *Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do.*

<sup>32</sup> *I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."*

- a. How is Matthew unique from the other disciples you have studied thus far? Describe how he is different from Peter and his companions.



*are you a* DISCIPLE?

- b. How is Matthew like the other disciples? Describe what he has in common with Peter and his companions.
  
- c. What does Luke 5:29 reveal about Matthew?

In my own study of Matthew, I learned something about him that I'd never really noticed before: not one single word of anything he ever said is recorded in the Scriptures. This makes me think that he probably wasn't much of a talker.

Matthew was, however, a keen listener and observer. He wrote the Gospel of Matthew, and none of the other Gospels include more of Jesus' teachings and sermons than his does.<sup>2</sup> Matthew also had a very broad knowledge of the Old Testament quoting it over 50 times and referring to it over 75 times in his Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

One more thing about Matthew: all throughout his Gospel, he refers to himself as "Matthew the tax collector." None of the other Gospels refer to him in that way.<sup>4</sup> Personally, I think that's because Matthew never got over the two most gracious words a tax collector like him ever heard: Follow Me.

2. According to Luke 5:32, who does Jesus call, and what do every Christian and disciple have in common?

3. Read Luke 6:13-16 and record a complete list of the names of the 12 disciples.

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_ 5) \_\_\_\_\_ 6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_ 8) \_\_\_\_\_ 9) \_\_\_\_\_

10) \_\_\_\_\_ 11) \_\_\_\_\_ 12) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What other title/position did Jesus give to these men (v. 13)? \_\_\_\_\_

After appointing the 12 disciples, Luke 6:17 records that “Jesus came down [the mountain] with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people” (NASB). This passage reveals that Jesus had many disciples. The 12 were set apart as apostles, but all who followed Christ during that time were called “disciples.”

**NOTE:** You may notice that Nathanael’s name is missing from this list. Many Bible scholars believe that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person.

5. Meet some of my favorite disciples by reading the following passage:

**Luke 8:1-3**

- <sup>1</sup> *Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him,*  
<sup>2</sup> *along with some women he had healed and from whom he had cast out evil spirits. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons;*  
<sup>3</sup> *Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.*

Circle the names and pronouns of the women who followed Jesus, and notice what He did for them. What did they do for Jesus?

6. Another group of female disciples is mentioned in Mark 15:40-41. Read that passage—and be sure to note the context—then answer the following questions:
- Who are these women and, according to this passage, where are they?
  - What does this reveal about them and their relationship to Jesus?
  - Describe their relationship to Jesus prior to this event (v. 41).

*reflect*

7. You've just studied the back stories of Matthew and several women who followed Christ. What about your back story? Where were you, what were you doing, and what were you like when you met Jesus?

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8. As you conclude your first week of study, I have one final question for you: Are you a disciple? Circle your answer.

Yes          No

*Today we have substituted creedal belief for personal belief, and that is why so many are devoted to causes and so few devoted to Jesus Christ. People do not want to be devoted to Jesus, but only to the cause He started... If I am devoted to the cause of humanity only, I will soon be exhausted and come to the place where my love will falter; but if I love Jesus Christ personally and passionately, I can serve humanity though men treat me as a door-mat. The secret of a disciple's life is devotion to Jesus Christ... It is like a corn of wheat, which falls into the ground and dies, but presently it will spring up and alter the whole landscape (John 12:24).*

—Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*<sup>5</sup>

