



# **LIFEgroup Study Guide**

September 8 - September 22



# LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*  
*[[www.lbf.church/messages](http://www.lbf.church/messages)]*

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big, contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*  
*[danfranklin@lbfchurch.com](mailto:danfranklin@lbfchurch.com)*

## **Lesson 1: Learners**

John 1:35-39 • Pg. 7-9 • September 8

## **Lesson 2: The Cost**

Luke 14:25-33 • Pg. 10-12 • September 15

## **Lesson 3: Onward**

Philippians 3:12-14 • Pg. 13-15 • September 22



# The Discipleship Project

## Defining Discipleship

The word “discipleship” is often tossed around in Christian circles. Different people mean different things when they say it. Some use it to refer to one-on-one mentoring. Others use it to refer to small groups. Others mean Bible classes or personal disciplines or acts of service. It can be challenging to talk about discipleship because we are not always defining it the same way.

The New Testament word that is often translated as “disciple,” simply means “pupil” or “apprentice” or, more literally, “learner.” A disciple was someone who attached himself or herself to a teacher and sought to learn from them. And the learning was more than facts. The learning was about a way of life.

Jesus wasn’t the only New Testament figure to have disciples. John the Baptist had disciples (John 1:35), as did the Pharisees (Mark 2:18). Within the Jewish community, spiritual leaders had students (disciples) who followed them loyally and sought to emulate them. It was similar to the concept of apprenticeship. It was learning with the goal of being equipped for life.

Discipleship, then, is a word that refers to the idea that all Christians are disciples of Jesus. His great sacrifice has saved us. But when we placed our faith in him, this was not an impersonal exchange. We did not merely give him faith so that he would provide us with salvation. When we placed our faith in Jesus, we embraced him as Lord and became his disciples. To practice discipleship is to grow in our pursuit of learning from our Master. It means that we seek, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to put sin to death and to practice righteousness in the world. It means that we draw near to Jesus through prayer and Bible reading and other spiritual disciplines. It means that we seek to have an impact on the world as we reflect Jesus as the light of the world.

## Discipleship as All of Life

Discipleship is never finished. And discipleship is not a segmented part of our lives. Attending church on Sunday mornings is part of our discipleship. Reading the Bible and praying is part of our discipleship. Attending Bible classes and small groups is part of our discipleship. Taking risky steps of faith is a part of our discipleship. Discipleship is not a class that you take, and then you are a disciple. We are all disciples who are seeking to learn from the Master.

The leadership at Life Bible Fellowship Church has felt a calling to focus more on the concept of discipleship at this time in the life of our church. And while discipleship is tied into everything we do, we have an area of emphasis. We believe that part of our discipleship—and a part that is often missing in our culture—is intentional relationships in which believers spur one another on to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. This is more than simple friendship. This is brothers and sisters challenging one another, comforting one another, rebuking one another, praying for one another, and encouraging one another. We believe that God is calling us toward more purposeful relationships (one-on-one or small groups) in which we pursue growth in following Jesus.

## This Study

This 3-week study will walk through three passages that touch on elements of being a disciple. The first introduces the idea concept of being a disciple. The second focuses on the cost of being Jesus' disciple. The third reminds us that discipleship is a lifelong project. In each lesson, part of the application section will focus on how each of us can pursue growth in discipleship through our relationships.

As you enter into the lessons of this study, lean into the concept of being a disciple. Challenge yourself (and others) in ways that you have been more of a consumer than a disciple. And look specifically at how, in purposeful relationships, you can seek growth and can also challenge others to grow. After all, the Master we are following is one who was willing to lay down his life for us. The more closely we walk with him, the more life and joy and hope we will experience in our lives.





# Learners

## Lesson 1 • September 8 • by Dan Franklin

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### Main Point

To be a disciple of Jesus is to attach yourself to him as a learner and a follower.

*he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.”*

### Getting Started

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “disciple”?

2. Who has had the most significant role in helping you grow in your relationship with Jesus?

This passage takes place right near the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. He has yet to do anything miraculous, but he has begun to gather a following. His growing following was aided mainly by John the Baptist. John was a prominent figure in Israel at the time, and he was preaching a message of repentance to the entire Jewish nation. Early in John 1, however, John the Baptist affirmed that he was not the Messiah that the Jews were anticipating. Instead, he was the one who was called to pave the way for the Messiah.

### Explanation of the Passage

Read John 1:35-39.

<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup> “Come,”

In the above passage, John actively paves the way for Jesus. While John is sitting with two of his disciples, he directs their attention to Jesus. He refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. He referred to Jesus in the same way in John 1:29, adding, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John’s actions here are striking because he is directing his disciples, who were loyal to him to transfer their loyalty and attention to Jesus. And John is successful in his goal because his disciples leave him to follow Jesus. John’s motivation for this selfless action is revealed in John 3:30 when he says of Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less.”

This passage also introduces us to the idea that the term “disciple” did not originate with Jesus. To be a disciple meant to be a student, an apprentice, or, literally, a “learner.” John had disciples, as did the Pharisees (Mark 2:18). Jesus’ disciples were not just the 12 whom he called “apostles.” Jesus’ disciples included anyone who was following him and who had placed their faith in him.

When Jesus turns around and sees two of John’s disciples following him, he asks them what they want. Their response is to call him “Rabbi,” which means “Teacher.” These two men were, more or less, asking Jesus if they could be his disciples. They wanted him to be their new Rabbi. They ask him where he is staying, seeming to imply that they want to go wherever he is going. His response to them is to invite them to come and see. They do, and they end up spending the day with him. And eventually, they upend their lives to follow him, to learn from him, and to place their full faith in him as the Son of God.

## Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or the sermon, if you heard it?

4. John refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. He does so also a few verses earlier in John 1:29, adding that Jesus “takes away the sins of the world.” How does Jesus’ identity as the Lamb of God shape your attitude toward wanting to be his disciple?

5. Read John 1:19-28, which gives some background on John the Baptist. How does this earlier passage relate to John the Baptist, directing his disciples toward Jesus?

6. John’s disciples end up leaving him to follow Jesus. As you think of your own life, what have you left behind to follow Jesus?

7. Jesus came to the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). But he also came to reveal God to us (John 1:18). In verse 38, Jesus’ new disciples call him “Teacher.” In what ways are you looking to Jesus as a teacher?

## Wrestling with Issues

8. In the New Testament, a disciple of Jesus is the same as a Christian. It is not a select category of Christians. That said, do you think someone can be a Christian without actively following Jesus? Explain your answer.



# Taking it to Heart

9. We all use different sources (friends, books, public figures) to form our grid for looking at the world. How are you, as Jesus' disciple, looking to him as the ultimate source for creating your grid for reality?

10. A critical way that we grow as Jesus' disciples is through purposeful relationships with other disciples. Currently, at LBF Church, we are encouraging everyone to get into purposeful discipleship relationships with others at the church. How do you sense that God is calling you to participate in this?



# The Cost

Lesson 2 • September 15 • by Dan Franklin

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## Main Point

Being a disciple of Jesus is costly.

## Getting Started

1. What has it cost you to follow Jesus?

2. What are some things that people are often unwilling to leave behind to follow Jesus?

## Explanation of the Passage

Read Luke 14:25-33.

*"<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And*

*whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

*<sup>28</sup> "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'*

*<sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."*

In this passage, Jesus speaks boldly about the cost of being his disciple. To be clear, Jesus was not differentiating between believers and disciples. To believe in him was to become his disciple. Therefore when he talks about the cost of discipleship, he is talking about becoming a Christian.

In verse 26, Jesus uses shocking language, saying that no one can be his disciple unless that person first hates his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and their own life. How in the world can Jesus, who champions love, call people to "hate" others? The

explanation lies in the difference between how Jesus is using the word and how we often use the word. Matthew 6:24, Jesus says that a person cannot serve both God and riches because he will serve one of them and hate the other. The idea is not that a person who serves God must actively despise riches. The idea is that the person must choose God over riches when the two conflict. Jesus is saying something similar here. He is saying that no human relationship can supersede a disciple's devotion to Jesus. Furthermore, not even a person's love for their own life or luxury can supersede Jesus' calling. The disciple must be ready to die (take up their cross) for Jesus.

Jesus then gives a couple of illustrations about counting the cost. The first illustration is of a man who wants to build a tower. He will first determine whether he has enough funds to complete the project. Otherwise, he will look foolish standing at the base of a partly-built tower. The second illustration is of a king who wants to go to war. First, he will determine whether he can defeat his enemy. If he can't, he will ask for terms of peace. Jesus' point is clear: Don't commit to something unless you know what you're getting into.

Jesus encourages people to count the cost of being his disciple. And, according to him, the cost is that the disciple must be willing to give up everything they have. Jesus is not playing bait-and-switch. He is not hiding the details in the fine print. He is inviting people to experience the joy and the hope and the eternal life that only he can offer. He is making clear that anyone who placed their faith in him needs to be ready to give up everything else to follow him.

## Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or the sermon, if you heard it?

4. When Jesus uses the word “hate” in verse 26, it is shocking. Read the following quote, which seeks to explain Jesus' meaning. What are your thoughts on what it means to “hate” others in the way Jesus intends?

*“The Saviour, of course, does not mean that he who desires to follow Him must hate his parents and other loved ones as such, but certainly that if loyalty to Him clashes with loyalty to them he is to treat his loved ones in this connection as though they are persons whom he hates.” (Norval Geldenhuys, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Luke)*

5. In verses, 28-32 Jesus gives two illustrations about considering the cost. Give some examples of ways that being Jesus' disciple can be costly to people today?

6. Jesus says in verse 33 that no one can be his disciple unless that person is ready to give up everything. Why do you think Jesus is so overt with calling people to count the cost of discipleship?

10. In your relationships with other believers, how can you encourage—and receive encouragement—to live out discipleship in the all-encompassing way Jesus talks about in this passage?

7. What are some dangers of someone becoming a Christian without knowing the difficulties involved in following Jesus?

## **Wrestling with Issues**

8. What do you think is the role of hobbies and recreation in the lives of Christians, in light of Jesus' words about disciples needing to hate "their own life"?

## **Taking it to Heart**

9. What do you think are the most significant competitors in your own heart for your full devotion to Jesus as his disciple?



## Onward

### Lesson 3 • September 22 • by Dan Franklin

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## Main Point

Being a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong project.

## Getting Started

1. Share about an area of growth in godliness that has been a lifelong project for you.

2. Do you find that you are more likely to be motivated by your shortcomings or more likely to be discouraged by them? Explain your answer.

## Explanation of the Passage

Read Philippians 3:12-14.

*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

*<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  
<sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

This passage comes on the heels of Paul talking about how he disregards all of the prominences that he had before he knew Jesus, and that he now devotes his life to knowing Jesus better. He makes excellent statements in Philippians 3:10-11 about wanting to know Jesus in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. That is the context for the passage in this lesson.

Paul follows his grand statements about wanting to know Jesus by saying that he has not yet obtained this. In other words, he is still seeking to grow in his relationship with Jesus. There is more ground to be taken. There are more significant prizes to be obtained. There is more life and joy and hope to be experienced. Paul has not yet arrived. But he presses on, seeking to take hold of that for which Jesus took hold of him. In other words, Jesus called him out of darkness and condemnation so that Paul would experience the newness of life that Jesus offers. And Paul wants to do all that he can to experience that new life. He wants to make his goal for himself the same as Jesus' goal for him.

In verse 13, Paul reiterates that he does not yet believe that he has achieved his goal. Paul, who seems like the most celebrated Christian in history, did not think that he was beyond growth. But he did not despair the fact that he still had more to pursue. Instead, he chose to press on, forgetting what was behind and straining toward what was ahead. He left his failures and sins and shortcomings in the past, and he reached out toward the growth and new life that Jesus had for him in the future.

In verse 14, Paul gets more specific with the goal he has. The goal is to win the prize for which God had called him heavenward in Christ Jesus. Paul is not talking about winning his salvation. Jesus was the one who won that prize for Paul (and for all of us). The prize reflects that Paul is using athletic imagery in this passage. He is a runner, and he doesn't want to fall short of finishing the race. He knows that there is more joy, more hope, more life, more closeness with Jesus, and more eternal rewards in store as he presses on toward God's calling for him.

## Digging In

3. What struck you most about the passage—or the sermon, if you heard it?

4. Paul says that he has not yet obtained the godliness that he is pursuing. How does this make you feel about your pursuit of godliness?

5. In verse 12, Paul says that he presses on.

6. Paul says that he forgets what is behind and strains toward what is ahead. What are some things that you think you need to "forget" to press on toward what God is calling you to?

7. In verse 14, Paul essentially says that he has made his goal for himself the same as God's goal for him. How do you think your life would change if your goal for yourself was the same as God's goal for you?

## Wrestling with Issues

8. It can be a temptation to be fatalistic about our growth in godliness if we believe that we will never—this side of heaven—arrive. How do you think believers are meant to fight this sense of fatalism?

## Taking it to Heart

9. Name at least one specific way in which you are pressing on right now in your pursuit of a closer walk with God.

10. How do you think your relationships with other believers can play a part in you pressing on toward God's good goals for you?