



# Following Jesus

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What it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ



CONGRATULATIONS! You've stepped out in faith and have given your life to Jesus. Jesus always honors faith. Whether you are just entering into a relationship with Jesus or rededicating your life to follow Him, anytime you move closer to Jesus you are doing a wise and life giving thing.

Water of Life wants to help you grow in your faith, which is why we've put this resource together. As you start your journey, you are on the greatest adventure of a lifetime; a journey of **Following Jesus**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Dan Cull".

Pastor Dan

**Senior Pastor**



At Water of Life, God has given us a mission that drives everything we do. That mission is to see people's lives changed and transformed. We believe our lives should demonstrate this by exhibiting a passion for God and compassion for people. All we do centers around this; wanting to see people transformed, passionately pursuing Jesus and caring enough for people to do something about it.

In short, we believe Jesus was clear about loving and caring for others. Before He left the earth, He told us that one command sums up all the others - love God and love others like God loves you. The Bible uses a word for someone with a transformed life, a life touched by Jesus. It is a word that is rarely used in our culture today - a disciple. What exactly is a disciple? How does a disciple think, act or even pray? Let's take a closer look.

A disciple literally means a follower or a learner. A disciple is ***someone who is learning to follow Jesus as their Teacher and Lord in the way that they live, love and care for others.*** Let's briefly highlight a few key words.

**Learning:** In Luke 6:40 Jesus said, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.*" Learning to be like Jesus is a life-long journey of following Him. We never "arrive" and complete the journey this side of heaven.

**Live like Jesus:** 1 John 2:5b-6 NLT says, "*...That is how we know we are living in Him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*" Our goal is

to pattern our lives after Jesus and His life. *Jesus is our model for living.*

**Love like Jesus:** In John 15:12 Jesus said, *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”* We don’t love as the world loves; we love as Jesus loved. *Jesus is our model for loving.*

**Caring for and serving others:** In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”* Jesus’ life and mission was always to love the Father and to serve others. *Jesus is our model for serving.*

Jesus gave us the example for what it means to be a follower or a disciple. Jesus is our model for living, loving and serving, but what does this actually look like?

There are three pictures that create a framework for what it means to be learning to live and love like Jesus while we serve others. **Adoption, Abiding, and Ambassador.** Let me explain each of these.

The Bible says that God adopts us as His own. This is our key to life, living in the Father’s love. The picture of Adoption points “up” to our adoption as sons and daughters of God.

The picture of Abiding points “in” to how we abide or live in Jesus. The word abide means to stay in or to live in. This is a huge part of our journey with Jesus. We live in Him and depend on His presence, which we know as the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the picture of Ambassador points “out” to our call to touch others for God’s kingdom. God touches us and blesses us so we can touch and bless others. Each of these pictures: Adoption, Abiding and Ambassador has a **Key Question** that points us back to the heart of discipleship and what it means to follow Jesus.



## Receiving God’s Love

### Family of God

## ADOPTION

God in His very nature is good. James 1:17 says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”* The greatest gift our Heavenly Father has given us is the gift of being called His sons and daughters; it is the gift of adoption. It is an amazing thought that God would call us His own!

**Ephesians 1:5 NLT** says, *“God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.”*

The picture of Adoption shows our identity; we belong to God. We are children of God and He is crazy about us. Adoption points us “up” to our relationship with our Heavenly Father and His amazing love for us. Adoption reminds us of the goodness of God to save us from our sins and bring us into His family (Ephesians 2:19).

God's plan from the beginning of time was to adopt us and bring us into His family. Being adopted by our Heavenly Father is not something we deserve nor something we can earn; it is a gift or what the Bible calls "grace." It is God's gift to us that, even though we don't deserve it, He would bring us into His family.

Your life as a follower of Jesus started the moment God put His love and life into you. Every day you can receive and believe you are wanted and accepted by your Heavenly Father and that you are destined to be a part of His family.

## **Children of God**

**Romans 8:15, 16 NLT** says, *"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, 'Abba, Father.' For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."*

Sometimes we get confused in our identity and forget who we are; we act like abandoned orphans rather than adopted children. The Spirit of God living inside of us is called "the Spirit of adoption" and He reminds us of our true identity and our true place; we are God's children and God is our Father.

The Spirit of God in us helps draw us to worship God as our Good Father. "To worship" means to acknowledge to God His value and worth, to thank Him for who He is and what He has done. Worship is such an important daily practice for a follower of

Jesus. The Holy Spirit will lead us to worship God and see Him as our greatest treasure and our deepest love.

## **Receive God's Love**

**1 John 4:19** says, *"We love because He first loved us."*

Our ability to love others stems from our ability to receive the Father's love for ourselves. It has been said that Christians find it easier to believe that God exists than to believe that God loves them. The foundation of our identity in Christ is that we are absolutely, unconditionally, cherished and loved by God. Drawing near to God daily helps remind us to be grounded in the reality of God's love for us.

This is why scripture tells us to *"Keep yourselves in the love of God"* (Jude 1:21). The most important thing we can do in life is open our hearts to Jesus' love for us. If we are going to love those around us, we must first experience and be transformed by God's love for us.

Drawing near to Him and allowing Him to love us deeply is a daily journey with Jesus. One way we can do this is by worshipping Him. Take some time by yourself, play some worship music and allow God's love to shower over you.

The picture of Adoption is, we look "up" and are reminded of God's grace, His gift in us to live out our adoption as His children. Like the needle of a compass that always points to true north, the love of God points us back to the truth of who God is and who we are in Him.

**Key Question:** *“God, how can you be so good?”*

This question reminds us of the goodness of God. Think like this, your adoption, like everything in life, is a gift of grace. It is undeserved and yet freely given. This key question, “God, how can You be so good?” can help shift your perspective in any situation. It takes the focus off ourselves and puts it on God.

We interrupt the voices of shame and lies we so often believe about ourselves and allow the voice of the Father to speak, telling us we belong to Him. We don’t change so God can love us. God loves us and, as a result, we can be changed. What should our response be to all God has done for us? “God, how can You be so good?”

Use this **Key Question** as a springboard to prayer:

*“God, how can You be so good that You would love me when I feel so unloved?”*

*“God, how can You be so good that You would never leave me?”*

*“God, how can You be so good to give me what I don’t deserve?”*

**Additional Discipleship Questions:**

- How has God been good to you this week?
- How have you sensed God’s loving presence?



- How is being a child of God helping shape your identity?

## Putting it into Practice

- Read out loud 1 John 4:19, *"We love because He first loved us."*
- Repeat that verse slowly a few times, choosing to believe each word. Let the truth of God's Word sink deep into your heart. You can make a daily practice out of reading and memorizing God's Word.
- Take a moment and try praying (prayer is just talking to and listening to God). Ask God the **Key Question**, *"God, how can You be so good?"*
- Close your eyes for a few minutes and imagine the loving arms of your Heavenly Father, holding you tight.
- Continue to imagine receiving God's love and goodness for you and listen for what He wants to tell you or show you. Afterwards, take a couple of minutes to write down your experience and what you heard.

## **Summary**

Adoption is all about ***receiving*** God's love. When we receive the love of the Father it changes everything. Adoption doesn't just show us who we are, it shows us who God is. Adoption pictures our relationship with God as our Father.

You've got to get this - there's nothing you can do to make God love you any more, and there's nothing you can do to make God love you any less. Knowing God as our Father is key to our identity in Christ. We cultivate the relationship with our Father by coming to Him daily in worship and prayer and then living in and staying in His Son Jesus throughout the day.



## **ABIDING**

### **Resting in God's Love**

Abiding literally means to live in, stay in or remain in. It is a picture of our love relationship with Jesus; it is how we live out our adoption. It points "in" by showing us that through the

Holy Spirit, we can have a relationship with Jesus that is intimate and alive.

Abiding helps us shift from striving or working for God (which is religion) to resting with God (which is relationship). As we stay connected to Jesus and learn to listen to His Holy Spirit, we grow in understanding God's heart for us and for others.

### **Stay Connected to Jesus**

**John 15:5** says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

Jesus invites us to abide in Him, to stay close, stay connected, to remain and don't leave. This is what Jesus did with His Father (John 5:19). As His disciples

we are called to imitate Him in everything we do (1 John 2:6). The way we live like Jesus is by staying connected in Him. Abiding in Jesus is the practice of being aware of His presence and resting in His love (John 15:9).

Through resting and staying connected in Jesus, God bears fruit in our lives, and that fruit actually tells the world that we are Jesus' disciples (John 15:8). What is the fruit of abiding in Jesus? It is our love for people (John 15:17). The more we abide in Jesus, the more He gives us a compassion for people that compels us to touch and bring others to Him (2 Corinthians 5:14).

### **Listen Closely to Jesus**

**John 10:27** says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."*

Jesus calls Himself "the Good Shepherd" and calls us His sheep (John 10:14). Jesus promises that His sheep hear His voice. The more time you spend with Jesus and His Word, the more clearly and confidently you will hear Him speak.

The reality is God desires to speak to us and He wants us to recognize His voice. We are all on a life-long journey of becoming increasingly aware and awake to the voice of God in us, and all around us.

### **We Hear Jesus Through His Holy Spirit**

**John 16:12-13** says, *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit*

*of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come."*

Jesus still speaks to His followers and disciples today through the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus living inside of us. The Holy Spirit is like a deposit of Jesus' presence in us and His job is to guide us through life. He will always lead us to Jesus. He is called "the Spirit of truth" because whatever He speaks to us comes right from the heart of the Father.

The primary way to be with Jesus and be aware of Him is through our connection to the Holy Spirit who is with us forever (John 14:16). So how do you do that? Keep God before your mind and redirect your thoughts to Him throughout the day by asking this key question.

**Key Question:** *"Holy Spirit, what are You saying?"*

This question keeps our relationship with Jesus current, fresh and alive because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Every day we can wake up and ask, "Holy Spirit, what are You saying to me today?" In the everyday grind of life, we can attune our spiritual ears to the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus, and ask "Jesus, what are You saying to me right now?"

Use this **Key Question** as a springboard to prayer:

*"Holy Spirit, what are You saying/doing in this situation?"*

*“Holy Spirit, what are You saying to me/us?”*

*“Holy Spirit, what direction are You leading me/us?”*

### **Additional Discipleship Questions:**

- When was the last time you heard God speak to you? What did He say?
- “Jesus, what are Your loving thoughts toward me today?”
- “God, how are You using my current situation to grow and mature me?”

### **Putting it into Practice**

- Write down on a piece of paper (or your journal) the **Key Question**, *“Holy Spirit, what are You saying?”* Take a couple of minutes and try praying (remember, prayer is just talking to and listening to God).
- Close your eyes and imagine Jesus right there with you. Ask, “Holy Spirit, what are You saying to me?” You might sense a feeling, see a picture or hear a word or phrase. Write down your experience and what you heard. You may want to keep a journal of your times of talking to and listening to God.
- The Holy Spirit will never tell you anything that contradicts what He’s already said in the Bible, so that’s your test for whether what you hear is from God or not. Don’t worry if you don’t hear anything right away. It’s not about getting it perfect; it’s about believing that you were created to hear Jesus’ voice.

## Summary

Adoption is about *receiving* God's love and abiding is all about *resting* in God's love. We rest in God's love for us and in the comfort of His continual presence with us. We then nurture our relationship with God by staying connected to Jesus and by listening to His Holy Spirit. "Abiding" pictures our relationship with Jesus as our Good Shepherd. He leads and guides us, not only into His love, but into His world to be His ambassadors.

## Releasing God's Love



The overarching story of the Bible is the kingdom of God and His desire is to touch people and bring life to the world.

### **AMBASSADOR**

The gospel is the story about Jesus, the King of God's kingdom and how He has come to save us from our sins (Luke 2:10-11)! As followers of Jesus, we bring our lives under the rule and reign of God by surrendering to Him daily - spirit, soul and body, heart, mind and will.

He didn't live for Himself or His own self-interests; Jesus lived daily giving His life away (John 15:13). The picture of Ambassador shows us a key part of our destiny as disciples and followers of Jesus living our lives for the sake of others, and releasing God's love to those around us.

Ambassador points us “out”, as we are sent out by King Jesus to share His life and love with the world and advance His kingdom on earth (Matthew 6:10).

What does having compassion for people look like? It looks like Water of Life’s Core Values of sending and caring; going to the poor, the needy and the hurting of the world and touching them with Jesus’ love. It looks like being an ambassador.

## **Receive to Give**

**Matthew 10:5-8** says, *“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”*

Jesus poured into twelve people day in day out, month in month out, for three years. Jesus invested in them not so they could just keep His teachings, message and miracles to themselves, but so that they could give it away to others.

## **Kingdom Representatives**

**2 Corinthians 5:20-21 NLT** says, *“So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”*

The Bible calls every disciple an “ambassador.” An ambassador is the highest-ranking person who represents his or her own government while living in another country. We represent the King and the Kingdom of God on the earth (Luke 17:21) and God wants to use us to bring people to Him.

God has given us His story to share with the world; it is a message of hope and healing for people. It is a call to come home to God and join His family. Adoption and abiding are all about God’s loving touch in us, but our call as ambassadors is God’s love moving through us to serve and love the world.

## **Disciples Make Disciples**

**Matthew 28:18-20** says, *“And 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”*

Jesus’ last words were His most important words. He sends out His disciples by telling them to “go” and make disciples. Jesus’ parting words were actually a command, and that command wasn’t just for Jesus’ disciples back then, it is still for Jesus’ disciples today. This last command of Jesus is for every disciple or follower to make other disciples who follow and obey Jesus.



Our adoption changes our journey and our identity. Our abiding and staying in Jesus changes our view of others. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring life to others. As we pour into others and live life with others, we share the message of Jesus and help people follow the way of Jesus; this is how we make disciples.

**Key Question:** *“Jesus, how am I doing at loving those You have given me to love?”*

This question shifts the focus off of ourselves and onto others, specifically those family, friends and neighbors who are far from God. If we say we love Jesus then we need to love the people Jesus loves.

The measurement of someone’s spiritual growth is more than just reading or memorizing the Bible. It is more than just spending time with God each day or going to church. The measurement of a disciple’s spiritual growth is growing in love for others.

Jesus said in John 13:35, *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* Arguably, what matters most to God alongside our love for Him is our love for others (Mark 12:30-31, 1 Corinthians 13:1-4, 1 John 3:16-17, Galatians 5:6). As we live out our identity as ambassadors, we can ask the following key question.

**Key Question:** *“Jesus, how am I doing at loving those You have given me to love?”*

Use this **Key Question** as a springboard to prayer:

*"Jesus, where/who do You want me to serve?"*

*"Jesus, empower me to love like You love."*

*"Jesus, how am I doing at loving my neighbor like You love me?"*

### **Additional Discipleship Questions:**

- Is there any area of your life that you have not yet given control over to Jesus?
- When was the last time you shared with someone what Jesus has done for you?
- Who are two or three people who are not yet following Jesus that you can start or continue praying for?

### **Putting it into Practice**

- Take a moment and try praying (you've got the hang of this now).
- Using the above **Key Question**, ask *"Jesus, how am I doing at loving those You have given me to love?"*
- Listen to what Jesus might be inviting you to do this week to touch someone else's life.
- Write down what you hear Jesus saying, and then do it.

## **Summary**

Adoption is about ***receiving*** God's love, abiding is about ***resting*** in God's love and ambassador is about ***releasing*** God's love. Every follower of Jesus has the amazing privilege of being Jesus' representative in the world. We do this by caring for and serving others the way Jesus cares for and serves us.

Being an ambassador doesn't just show us who we are, it shows us who God is. God is not just our Father, not just our Shepherd, but He is also our King. This is really important! We've got to surrender daily to Jesus and allow Him to rule and reign over us.

As followers of Jesus, God pours into us, heals and uses us so we can touch other people's lives. Every follower of Jesus is sent out as an ambassador to love people into God's kingdom.

## **In Conclusion**

What does it mean for you to be a disciple? It means ***learning to follow Jesus as your Teacher and Lord in the way that you live, love and care for others***. When you follow Jesus, you receive God's love through your adoption, you rest in God's love through abiding and you release God's love by being an ambassador.

Following Jesus is not something you attain or a box you check; being a disciple is who you are. It is a day in day out, life-long journey of trusting, surrendering and following God as your Father, Shepherd and King.

A follower of Jesus receives God's love, rests in God's love and releases God's love to the world. Each day is an incredible journey of allowing God to love you as your Father, lead you as your Shepherd and send you as your King.

May these pictures of Adoption, Abiding and Ambassador help and guide you on your journey as you take your next steps in following Jesus.

## Following Jesus

**A disciple:** someone who is learning to follow Jesus as their Teacher and Lord, in the the way that they live, love and care for others.

### **Identity:**

#### Who we are

Adopted

Abiding

Ambassadors

#### Who God is

Father

Shepherd

King

***Let God love you as Father, lead you as Shepherd, and send you as King.***

### **Key Discipleship Questions:**

*"God, how can You be so good?"*

*"Holy Spirit, what are You saying?"*

*"Jesus, how am I doing at loving those You have given me to love?"*



## **ADOPTION**



### **up- Receiving God's Love**

God is crazy about you and He wants you to receive and believe His love for you.

(Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:15-16, Ephesians 2:19, 1 John 4:19).

**Key Discipleship Question:** *"God, how can You be so good?"*

### **Additional Discipleship Questions:**

- How has God been good to you this week?
- How have you sensed God's loving presence?
- How is being a child of God helping shape your identity?



## **ABIDING**



### **in- Resting in God's Love**

You live with Jesus by resting in His love and by listening and responding to the Holy Spirit.

(John 15:5, 1 John 2:6, Galatians 5:25, John 10:27, Romans 8:4).

**Key Discipleship Question:** *"Holy Spirit, what are You saying?"*

### Additional Discipleship Questions:

- When was the last time you heard God speak to you? What did He say?
- “Jesus, what are Your loving thoughts toward me today?”
- “God, how are You using my current situation to grow and mature me?”



**AMBASSADOR**

← out → **Releasing God's Love**

Your end goal is to love God and out of that love, serve others as Jesus did by making disciples.

(Matthew 25:40, 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, John 15:13, Matthew 28:18-20).

**Key Discipleship Question:** *“Jesus, how am I doing at loving those You have given me to love?”*

### Additional Discipleship Questions:

- “Jesus, where/who do You want me to serve?”
- “Jesus, empower me to love like You love.”
- “Jesus, how am I doing at loving my neighbor as myself?”



