



KINGDOM DISCIPLES

BIBLE STUDY

TONY EVANS

HEAVEN'S
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ON EARTH

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ISBN 978-1-4158-7202-4 • Item 005469851

Dewey decimal classification: 248.5

Subject headings: DISCIPLESHIP \ EVANGELISTIC WORK \ KINGDOM OF GOD

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Printed in the United States of America

Groups Ministry Publishing • LifeWay Resources • One LifeWay Plaza • Nashville, TN 37234

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THE AUTHOR

DR. TONY EVANS is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He is a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation.

Dr. Evans has served as the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship for more than forty years, witnessing its growth from ten people in 1976 to more than ten thousand congregants with more than one hundred ministries.

Dr. Evans also serves as the president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in America through the church. His daily radio broadcast, "The Alternative with Dr. Tony

Evans," can be heard on more than thirteen hundred radio outlets throughout the United States and in more than 130 countries.

Dr. Evans has authored more than one hundred books, including *Oneness Embraced*, *The Kingdom Agenda*, *Marriage Matters*, *Kingdom Man*, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, *It's Not Too Late*, *Horizontal Jesus*, *The Power of God's Names*, *Detours*, and *Kingdom Disciples*. Dr. Evans, a former chaplain for the NFL Dallas Cowboys, is currently the chaplain for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, a team he has served for more than thirty years.

Through his local church and national ministry, Dr. Evans has set in motion a kingdom-agenda philosophy of ministry that teaches God's comprehensive rule over every area of life, as demonstrated through the individual, family, church, and society.

Dr. Evans is married to Lois, his wife and ministry partner of more than forty years. They are the proud parents of four: Chrystal, Priscilla, Anthony Jr., and Jonathan.

INTRODUCTION

Cradled within the depths of all that defines our humanity lies an unyielding fascination with kingdom. No matter what color, creed, or culture we examine, even the most cursory glance into the annals and accounts passed down either by pen or by tongue reveals something intertwined with kingdom. Whether it's the great kings of Scripture, such as David and Solomon, or whether it's rulers like Caesar, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, and Tutankhamen, the leaders of kingdoms captivate us, intriguing our imaginations.

Even rulers who didn't hold the official title of king have left their legacies, for good or for bad, to enthrall us. Napoleon, the dominator of continental Europe, possessed a formidable intellect and a superior military mind. For several hundred years the pharaohs used their considerable strength and skill to advance Egypt beyond the other nations in academics, engineering, medicine, and writing. The monarchs, spanning more than sixteen hundred years of history, ruled over what humbly began as the Angles, then Aengla Land, and eventually what we know today as England.

Stories of conquerors, conquests, rebellions, and conspiracies mesmerize us. We tell them to our children in fairy tales riddled with kings, queens, princes, princesses, and kingdoms. The life of a king or a queen is often envied. Yet that envy is naïve. As the playwright William Shakespeare wrote, "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."¹ Kings, queens, and rulers frequently function in a culture of conflict, even violence. As a result, history reminds us again and again, through what may seem like the same story set on a different stage, that kings and rulers often resort to extreme measures to protect their personal interests and power.

Nowhere in any story of a king or a kingdom do we read about the ruler himself sacrificing his greatest treasure simply for the benefit of others. Sure, sacrifices were made. But always toward the aim of preserving power rather than yielding it.

That is, except for the one true King who gave up His own Son, Jesus Christ, so that those who believed on Him—His death, burial, and resurrection—would be restored to a place of fellowship and dominion with their King, a position they had lost in the battle of the garden.

The King gave His life so that we could gain access to His kingdom. He offered His example for us to follow and emulate. Under His rule we're called to the highest position as heirs to His inheritance, freely granted to us when we follow Him as a true kingdom disciple. Let's explore together what it means to live all of life under the comprehensive rule of God, gaining all the access and authority designed for royalty.

1. William Shakespeare, *History of Henry IV*, act 3, scene 1, line 1735, *Open Source Shakespeare*, accessed November 10, 2017, http://opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=henry4p2&Act=3&Scene=1&Scope=scene.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible-study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Dr. Evans.

START

This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video segment.

WATCH

This page includes key points from Dr. Evans's teaching, along with blanks for taking notes as participants watch the video.

DISCUSS

This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Dr. Evans's video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Each week provides five days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions. The personal study revisits stories, Scriptures, and themes Dr. Evans introduced in the videos so that participants can understand and apply them on a personal level. The days are numbered 1–5 to provide personal reading and activities for each day of the week, leaving two days off to worship with your church family and to meet as a small group. If your group meets on the same day as your worship gathering, use the extra day to reflect on what God is teaching you and to practice putting the biblical principles into action.

TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Follow these guidelines to prepare for each group session.

PRAYERFULLY PREPARE

REVIEW

Review the weekly material and group questions ahead of time.

PRAY

Be intentional about praying for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by considering these details:

SEATING

TEMPERATURE

LIGHTING

FOOD OR DRINK

SURROUNDING NOISE

GENERAL CLEANLINESS

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

INCLUDE OTHERS

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include any people who visit the group and to invite new people to join your group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible-study book.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES

Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER

Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS

Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP

Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL

Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

KEEP CONNECTING

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through these communication channels:

EMAILS

TEXTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities like these:

MEALS

FUN ACTIVITIES

PROJECTS AROUND YOUR HOME,

CHURCH, OR COMMUNITY



KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Week One

THE MISSING KEY

Group Experience



START

Welcome to session 1 of Kingdom Disciples. Begin by taking a few minutes to be sure everyone knows one another, especially if this is your first time to meet as a group.

What sources of authority lead and influence the way you live?

How do these authorities shape the decisions you make?

All people live under the rules and guidance of authority. Whether that authority is a local or national governing authority or a supervisor at work, we all know what it means to live under the authority of another person. For kingdom disciples, the ruling and reigning authority is Jesus Christ. In this session Dr. Evans will talk about what it means to be kingdom disciples who bring Jesus' authority to bear on the world around us.

Before we learn what Dr. Evans has to teach us about being a kingdom disciple, would somebody pray for our time together, asking the Lord to open our hearts and minds to His Word as we begin this study?

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

WATCH

Refer to this viewer guide as you watch video session 1.

KINGDOM DISCIPLE

A believer in Christ who takes part in the spiritual-development process of progressively learning how to live all of their lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ

Worshiping God is the recognition of who He is, what He has done, and what you are trusting Him to do.

Authority means “power in legitimate hands.”

The purpose of the Book of Matthew is to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is King.

The word *make disciples* is an imperative, which means it’s a command; it’s not a request.

Disciples are transformed people who transfer the values of the kingdom of God.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE DISCIPLES

1. Go.
2. Baptize them.
3. Teach them.

Go and deliver the fact that Jesus Christ has come and that He has come with authority.

Baptism is your place of identification.

The purpose of teaching is to understand or to learn what it means to be a representative.

You are learning the Word of God in order to use the Word of God to express the authority of the Word of God as the representative of the lordship of Jesus Christ as a kingdom disciple.

When you are a kingdom disciple and a kingdom-disciple maker, you get more experience of Jesus Christ than if you are not.

THE MISSING KEY



DISCUSS

Discuss the video with your group, using these questions.

How would you define what it means to be a disciple?

Read Matthew 28:19. What does it mean to make disciples? What distinction did Dr. Evans make between Christians and kingdom disciples?

A kingdom disciple understands that Jesus is King and that He rules. What's the relationship between discipleship and the authority of Jesus?

Jesus wants us to emulate not only His person but also His authority. What happens when we emulate Jesus' person without His authority?

Who or what besides Jesus do people look to as the ultimate authority in their lives?

Why do we treat the Great Commission like a polite request instead of an authoritative command?

Dr. Evans compared the authority of Christ to that of an official controlling a ball game. The problem today is that too many Christians have neglected their God-given authority and joined teams on the field. What are some teams you've joined that threaten your officiating responsibility in God's kingdom?

Dr. Evans said, "Baptism means more than getting someone wet. It means being identified." What are some other ways you identify with Christ in your daily life?

Describe a time when you saw God show up in a powerful way in the process of making disciples.

What would change about our community if this group of believers committed to extending Jesus' authority into the world around us?

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group session.

Personal Experience

KINGDOM LIVING

Jesus plainly spoke of His kingdom when He told Pilate that its ways don't reflect the ways of the kingdoms on earth:

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

JOHN 18:36

Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom without borders and a kingdom without time. To try and apply the rules, precepts, and writs of this world to this very unearthly kingdom would be similar to bringing a horse and a polo stick to an NFL linebacker on a football field and instructing him to play. The rules and tools of this earth don't govern the rules of God's kingdom. As the King, God sets the way His kingdom is to operate and function.

For example, in God's kingdom, neither race nor gender delineates inequality. In His kingdom, power goes to the weak who recognize their weakness and humbly look to Him. Forgiveness preeminently reigns, and the amount of money matters less than the heart that offers it, as we see in the case of the widow's mite (see Mark 12:41-44). Significance in this unusual kingdom is connected to service.

By the Holy Spirit, the story of this unique kingdom has been preserved for us, its subjects—kingdom disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ—in the Bible. Throughout Scripture, chroniclers inspired by the Spirit recorded; encouraged; equipped; lamented; and presented the history, rules, redemption, and purpose of our King and His kingdom.

Unfortunately, many of us today are living in the realm of a King we also seek to dethrone. We subtly undermine His reign through expressions of complacency; autonomy; independence; or simply a lack of connection to Him, His Word, His laws, and His covenants. As a result, we experience in our personal lives, homes, churches, communities, and nation the chaos that comes from rebellion.

In a kingdom, life is to be lived under the rule and authority of the King. The blessings of the covenant charter of our King in His Word, the authority He gives us through the dominion covenant (see Gen. 1:26-28), His promises, and His *chesed* love come only when we live all of life under God's rule as His disciples.



THE MISSING KEY

Day One

WHAT IS A KINGDOM DISCIPLE?

Welcome to your journey to become a full-fledged disciple of our King. Kingdom disciples are in short supply these days. The result has been a bevy of powerless Christians who attend powerless churches that embody a powerless presence in the world.

Until we return to lives of discipleship, we'll continue to fail in our calling to live as heaven's representatives on earth. This is because the power, authority, abundance, victory, and impact promised in God's Word to His people is ours only when we align ourselves under Him as His disciples. Until then we can anticipate that chaos and crisis will continue to reign supreme in spite of all the Christian activities we engage in, Christian books we read, Christian songs we sing, and small groups we join.

Discipleship is a very personal decision. It starts when a person commits himself or herself to God as His follower and allows the results of that commitment to overflow into everything else in life.

What's the difference between a disciple and a convert?

What are some ways you believe a kingdom disciple lives out that role?

List some practical outcomes in a person's life.

Surrender to Christ's lordship and obedience to His rule of love unlock God's power to bring heaven to bear on earth. A kingdom disciple lives out this divine power and influence. I define *kingdom disciple* this way:

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

A believer in Christ who takes part in the spiritual-developmental process of progressively learning to live all of life under the lordship of Jesus

The goal of kingdom disciples is to live transformed lives that transfer the values of the kingdom of God to earth so that they replicate themselves in the lives of others. The result of such replication is God's exercising His rule and His authority from heaven to history through His kingdom disciples.

Read Matthew 28:19. What's the central focus of this verse?

Define what it means to make a disciple.

**Can you make disciples without first being a disciple yourself?
Why or why not?**

Matthew 28:18 says:

Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

MATTHEW 28:18

THE MISSING KEY

The word translated as *authority* in the English version of this verse essentially means “power, right, liberty, jurisdiction, and strength.” *Strong’s Concordance* reveals that this term denotes “power of choice” or “doing as one pleases,” even “the power of judicial decisions.”¹ When Jesus said all authority was His in heaven and on earth, He was saying that He possesses the legal right to use that power.

Power without authority matters little. Take, for example, NFL players. They’re far more powerful than the older referees officiating the game. Yet they exercise that power only under the authority of the referees. If they choose to misuse their power, a referee simply throws out a flag. If the player persists in wrongly using his power, the referee can then eject him from the game altogether.

When Jesus said all authority had been given to Him, that authority encompassed not only power but also the right to use that power as He chose.

Read Job 1:12. What boundaries were placed on Satan with regard to Job?

**How does God's authority place limits on the way Satan exercises His power?
Why are these limits important for us to recognize?**

List two primary differences between Satan's limited power and Jesus' boundless authority.

1.

2.

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Power is someone's ability to influence another person through strength, personality, control, or deception. Authority, on the other hand, is someone's legitimate, vested, and formal right to wield power. Enormous difference exists between the two realities, but when we fail to discern this difference, we can foolishly choose to fight power with power (rather than authority) or seek to live by our own power (rather than the authority given to us in Christ).

When Jesus was tested in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11), Satan's power was outmatched by Jesus' authority. After being offered temptations of power and fulfillment in this world, Jesus appealed to the full, final authority He possessed as the Son of God.

In other words, Satan has been given power only on earth. Unfortunately, far too many believers seek to overcome his tactics or fight his attacks in their own power. But that will never work. That's why we've been instructed never to rebuke Satan on our own and with our own skills (see Eph. 6:12-18) but rather to resist him (see Jas. 4:7) and to rebuke him only in the authority of Jesus' name (see Zech. 3:2; Jude 9).

When you understand the importance of authority, you'll grow as a kingdom disciple to the point that you can not only resist the devil but also call on heaven, as Jesus did, to bear in your earthly endeavors.

Refer to Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. What are some ways we take hold of heaven's authority and make it ours?

Read John 10:17-18. How far does Christ's authority reach? How does recognizing the extent of His authority bring you comfort and a sense of security?

THE MISSING KEY

If you've never differentiated between power and authority, let that sink in. Jesus offers you complete authority in Him when you live as His disciple. Many powers are coming against you that are stronger than you could ever be on your own, but He has overcome the world (see John 16:33). Consider the comfort and peace that come from knowing you have access to the authority of the Creator of the universe. Let that reality motivate you to grow as a disciple of the King.

Where do you most need Jesus' power and authority in your life today?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for this Bible study on power, authority, and discipleship. I commit my study to You and ask that You'll surround my days, thoughts, activities, and actions in such a way that this study will be a priority for me. In Christ's name, amen.

1. Strong's G1849, Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg1849&t=NASB>.



KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Day Two

SALVATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

According to Jesus, a disciple's first concern should be for God's will to be done on earth just as it's done in heaven (see Matt. 6:10). How is God's will done in heaven? Completely and perfectly, with no questions, no objections, and no debate. In fact, Satan was the only one ever to challenge God's will in heaven, and he was therefore banished.

Jesus' plan in making disciples is to establish a group of people who function as His legal representatives by reflecting and implementing God's authority and will on earth. This is our role and responsibility as kingdom disciples. The discipleship process is designed to transfer Jesus' authority to and through His followers. That way observing the lives of believers individually and collectively gives a glimpse into the activity of heaven.

Christians are to exercise heaven's authority in history. Kingdom discipleship and authority go hand in hand. Sometimes we miss this fact because discipleship and authority aren't usually taught as complementary ideas. But as a kingdom disciple, you're uniquely positioned as an extension of God's legitimate authority in heaven so that His will and work are done on earth. That's a very important calling.

Read Luke 9:1-2. What did Jesus give His disciples authority over and authority to do?

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (see Heb. 13:8). The authority He has provided for us as His disciples is the same as well. Why do you think so many disciples fail to exercise the type of authority Jesus gave us?

Because Jesus has already achieved victory and Satan is a defeated enemy, what's our role as Jesus' followers on earth?

THE MISSING KEY

The purpose of the church and of each individual believer is to make disciples, not just add names to the church roll or increase Bible-study attendance. It's not enough for the church just to be open a certain number of hours a week or offer a variety of programs. We're to make disciples. Only by making disciples can we reflect God's rule in history. Each time a disciple is made, God is robbing the domain of darkness and making someone His own. Jesus described this as entering the house of a strongman (Satan) and carrying off His property (see Matt. 12:29). People who respond to the call of salvation reflect God's rule in the world.

What can Christians do more intentionally, either corporately or individually, to make disciples?

Have you ever thought about discipleship as a means God uses to establish His authority on earth? Why or why not?

There's a distinction between a person's salvation and discipleship. Evangelism ought to carry a large emphasis in our churches and our personal lives, but the Christian life experience doesn't end at salvation. Salvation is just the beginning. Everyone who's saved should then grow as a disciple.

Salvation is absolutely free (see Rev. 22:17), and entrance into the kingdom is ensured forever when you place your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ and His promise to give eternal life to all who trust in Him (see John 5:24; 6:47). But becoming a kingdom disciple demands submission and surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life. Surrendering to Jesus' lordship means you choose to spend your time, talents, and treasure for God and His glory rather than your own.

The level to which you grow and live as a disciple will have a direct effect on your inheritance in the kingdom as well. While entrance into the kingdom is ensured through the finished work of Christ, your rewards will be determined by the degree of faithfulness with which you serve the King as His disciple here and now. (see Matt. 25:20-23; 1 Cor. 3:8).

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

In your own words, describe the difference between salvation and discipleship.

Why is it important to understand that while entrance into heaven is secured through Jesus' sacrificial death, your inheritance in heaven rests on your responsibility as a disciple on earth?

In what way should that understanding affect your behavior?

Calling demands that we change the way we live. Becoming a Christian is without a cost, but becoming a kingdom disciple demands a cost. We understand that commitment comes with a cost. Years ago when the military draft was still in operation, young men were often called into the service at very inopportune times. For example, it didn't matter if you had just gotten married. It was goodbye, bride; hello, Uncle Sam. The same was true if the draftee just got a great job. But this new draftee did more than just leave family and friends behind. He now became the property of the U.S. government. His new master dictated every detail of his life: when to get up or go to bed; what to eat; even how to dress, stand, and walk.

After boot camp the military took a further step in controlling the soldier's life. It selected a new location for him, usually far from home, and a new occupation. If the nation was at war, this soldier could be sent to the front line, where he might be killed in the line of duty.

If young men could be expected to sacrifice everything for their country, how much more should we as believers be willing to do whatever our Commander, Jesus Christ, asks of us? That's what's expected of us as His followers.

Read Mark 8:35-36 aloud. Substitute the words *a man* and *his* in verse 36 with personal pronouns for yourself. What does it mean to "gain the whole world" yet "forfeit" your soul?

THE MISSING KEY

In light of the fact that salvation is already yours through Jesus' sacrifice, what did He mean when He said if you lose your life for His sake, you'll gain it?

How do you gain the whole world yet lose your life? By pursuing temporal realities that don't last. A lifetime is only a moment on an eternal measuring line. When you accumulate things that last only these few moments on earth, you're forfeiting rewards and inheritance that will last forever. And in this world you're forfeiting the intangible riches God has to offer, such as joy, grace, kindness, and love.

For example, many people have a house but not a home. Many people have money but not peace. Many people have plans but not a purpose. The essence of life is far more important and valuable than the assets attached to it, because the essence will last longer than life itself (see 1 Cor. 3:11-15).

This principle of saving and losing your life is fixed. It's an if-then clause set in the spiritual laws that govern our existence and eternity. If and when you totally give yourself to God as His kingdom disciple, you're positioned to fully experience the abundant life Christ died to give you both now and forever (see John 10:10).

What's God calling you to forfeit and lay aside in order to follow Him more completely?

Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, I want to use my time on earth to live fully as a kingdom disciple. Give me discernment to choose wisely what will bring You glory and others good.

Help me view my whole life in light of Your kingdom and Your purposes. I'm Yours. In Christ's name, amen.



KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Day 3

PROCLAIMING CHRIST AND MAKING HIM KNOWN

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told those gathered around Him in Galilee to make disciples. But He added one stipulation as part of the command: “of all the nations.” Thus, the concern of discipleship isn’t just for individuals, our own spheres around us, or even our churches but also for systems that affect people’s lives, including government and nations.

That was a big task for those gathered around Jesus that day, even though the known world was limited to the Roman Empire. To make disciples of all nations, the early disciples would have to risk their lives covering territory and engaging with cultures that not only opposed them but also sought to harm them. They would need to possess and carry out kingdom authority to accomplish Christ’s calling.

Disciples were never sent out only to build a church. While their mission certainly included building the church, it wasn’t limited to that. With today’s focus on church growth and small groups, we may need to remind ourselves of this critical truth. Christ sent the disciples out to exercise dominion in His name.

That’s why the Jewish leaders got angry when the apostles came on the scene (see Acts 4). They couldn’t keep these guys quiet. They jailed them and whipped them, but Peter and the others kept preaching and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Later the Jews in Thessalonica even said, “These men who have upset the world have come here also” (see Acts 17:6).

What gave the apostles the boldness to stand in the temple and preach right under the noses of the religious leaders who had the authority to flog, imprison, and even execute them?

Read Acts 2:1-4. How did the Holy Spirit radically change the disciples’ lives?

THE MISSING KEY

How important is it for believers today to abide in the Holy Spirit's presence and access His power? What are some ways you can do that?

Read Acts 9:19-25; 17:5-9. What reactions or occurrences resulted from Paul's effort to proclaim Christ and make disciples?

Consider the example of the early church leaders who shared the gospel. How different are our contemporary approaches from theirs?

When the early believers went about the business of disciple making, they elicited a reaction; people were shaken up. Yet far too often when church people show up today, they find a place where they can relax and be comfortable. Nothing is demanded or expected of them.

Paul, on the other hand, always started something everywhere he went, not because he was a troublemaker but because he preached Jesus. He lived and breathed Jesus and expected others to do the same. He was a disciple, and that's where the trouble started.

Do you realize that Christ has commanded us as His disciples to make an impact on our communities? It's a command. He doesn't want us to be just another resident of our neighborhood or church, failing to make an impact for His kingdom.

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

When Jesus was on earth, no one was neutral toward Him. People either loved and revered Him or hated and tried to kill Him. But nobody ignored Him.

What are some ways you could proclaim Jesus and make disciples more intentionally?

What are some reservations you have in proclaiming Christ and seeking to make disciples of others?

Read Luke 8:14. What light does this verse shed on the reason many believers today don't live as kingdom disciples or don't seek to replicate kingdom disciples?

Read Romans 1:16. How does shame prevent believers from making disciples today?

The world today is largely ignoring Christians and the church on a myriad of issues because it isn't witnessing the authority we speak about, sing about, pray about, and preach about. What's worse is that many Christians aren't interested in Jesus either. Empty religion has replaced relationship. The church desperately needs people who are on fire from the power of the Holy Spirit, who have a burning desire to proclaim and serve Jesus, and who are so excited about Him that they're willing to take the risk of shaking up the status quo to make Him known.

THE MISSING KEY

You can't be like Jesus in your job, in your neighborhood, and possibly even in your church without facing opposition. Jesus and all His New Testament followers experienced persecution. You can't expect to escape it. Persecution—whether it comes through rejection, ridicule, or outright tribulation—is part and parcel of being a kingdom disciple. If you're having an easy time in your Christian life or if Satan never bothers you, you may want to check the depth of your discipleship and the authenticity of your obedience to Christ.

What keeps you from proclaiming Christ as faithfully as you should?

Read Mark 4:1-20. Which soil do you most identify with? What needs to change in your life, based on your answer to the first question?

What reason has God given you to trust Him beyond your fears? Why should you allow your faith to lead you beyond your comfort zone?

Prayer

Dear Lord, I give You permission to develop me as a kingdom disciple in a way that ignites a fire in my soul to proclaim Jesus Christ. Forgive me for neglecting so great a salvation by failing to pursue with passion the calling of making You known both near and far. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 4

**THE GYMNASIUM
OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Discipleship wasn't a new idea in New Testament times. It was a well-established concept in the Greek world in the centuries before Christ. The word *disciple* means “learner” or “student.”

The Greeks had disciples in the realm of philosophy. Plato, who's often referred to as the father of philosophy, developed a system of thought in the realms of epistemology (how we gain knowledge) and the meaning of life. Plato disciplined his student Aristotle, who took what he learned and built gymnasiums. In the ancient world, gymnasiums weren't just arenas for sporting events. They were also training centers or academies for teaching students Plato's thought and the system developed by Aristotle, known as Aristotelian logic. The students thus trained were *gymnatized*, the verb form of the Greek word for *gymnasium*.

This discipling process was so successful that it allowed the Greeks to influence the whole Greco-Roman world. Through this process, called Hellenization, people who weren't Greek began to adopt Greek thinking, language, and culture. That was the influence and impact of discipleship.

The New Testament applied this concept in a spiritual context so that we would know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to wield the kingdom influence that disciples were intended to have. As in the Greek system, Christian discipleship involves apprenticeship in which the apprentice, or student, is nurtured toward a particular goal.

Read Matthew 10:24-25 and identify two characteristics of a disciple.

1.

2.

A disciple is to be like the master, reflecting the master in every way. A disciple is one who is trained and nurtured to be like Jesus Christ.

THE MISSING KEY

Imagine you're learning a new trade from an experienced practitioner, but you choose not to follow your teacher's instruction. What does the refusal to follow instruction demonstrate about your feelings for the teacher?

What happens when a disciple of Jesus Christ chooses to ignore His instruction? How does this behavior reflect on Jesus Christ?

The goal of discipleship is conformity to the Savior, being transformed into the image or likeness of Christ. For example, we know from Scripture that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Therefore, because Jesus Christ is one in essence and personhood with the Trinity, Jesus is love. So we, as His disciples, ought to reflect a spirit of love to those around us.

Consider what happens when a believer becomes irritated from waiting in a long line and reveals that irritation to everyone around. It may seem like a small thing, but many small things eventually add up to be large things. The highest aim of a kingdom disciple is to replicate Christ's character, conduct, and compassion before the people around us.

Read the following verses.

Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.

ROMANS 8:29

The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

What does it mean to become “conformed to the image” of Christ and “transformed into” His image?

Describe a person you know who’s being conformed to the image of Christ. What makes his or her life distinct?

What are one or two areas in your life where you’d like to be more like Jesus? What’s one practical step you can take this week to move closer to Jesus in those areas?

A pastor friend of mine was visiting a college campus a number of years ago. He didn’t know that my son Anthony Jr. was a student there. Walking across campus, my friend saw a young man in the distance and then stopped dead in his tracks. *That has to be Tony Evans’s son, he told himself. He looks like Tony; he’s built like Tony; he even walks like Tony.*

He was right, of course. The young man he had spotted was Anthony. Even though the man was a long way off, Anthony’s characteristics were so obviously like mine that my friend told me, “I didn’t even know Anthony was in college yet. All I knew was that nobody could look that much like you and not be yours.”

People ought to be able to see you from a long way off and say, “That person has to be a follower of Jesus Christ.” They ought to be able to tell by the way you walk and talk, by the total orientation of your life, that you belong to Christ, because nobody could function the way you function and not know Him.

In other words, the family resemblance ought to be obvious. It ought to be clear where you stand. That’s what it means to be a kingdom disciple. You pattern your life after Christ and follow Him so closely that you speak, act, and think like Him and have a passion to help others do the same.

THE MISSING KEY

Take time today to memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17. Use this space to record it and reflect on its meaning.

Identify “old things” in your life—thoughts, actions, or attitudes—that have “passed away.” In what ways has your relationship with Jesus Christ made you new?

Being a kingdom disciple means embracing God’s will for your life and allowing it to become more important than your own will. You must be able to pray with Jesus:

**Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.**

MATTHEW 6:13

A kingdom disciple pursues God’s kingdom agenda. If that means staying single, you’re ready to do that for His sake. If that means staying in a marriage even though you aren’t happy in it, you’re ready to do that. If that means staying in a job you don’t like to which He has called you, you’re ready. If that means falling short of all your personal goals because you’re striving for His goals instead, that’s OK. Doing God’s will as His disciple and reflecting His character throughout your days will get you to the place, like Paul, where you can say, “I have finished the course” (2 Tim. 4:7). That’s your goal as a kingdom disciple.

Spend a few moments in silent reflection. Ask God to show you areas where you’re choosing your will above His will for your life. What adjustments do you need to make?

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

Identify a few periods in your life when you've seen significant spiritual growth. What did God do during those times to transform you, conforming you to His image?

How do we become sensitive to the Holy Spirit's nudging and leading in our lives?

What steps is He leading you to take this week?

Prayer

Lord, I want to live as a reflection of who You are in all I am. I ask that You'll bring about situations in my life to deepen my relationship with You and help conform me to your image. I love You and want to please You in all I do and in all I am. In Christ's name, amen.



THE MISSING KEY

Day 5

GO, BAPTIZE, AND TEACH

As we come to the end of our first week together, I hope you're starting to see how critical discipleship is. It's the key to unlocking the power and authority you need to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Not only are we learning that becoming a disciple is our highest calling, but we're also discovering that making disciples goes hand in hand with that calling.

The phrase "make disciples" in Matthew 28:19 is a command in the Greek language of the New Testament; in fact, it's the only command in the Great Commission. The other three activities—going, baptizing, and teaching—are participles that explain and expand the method for making disciples.

We have Jesus' authority and command to make disciples. This means He's with us in the process to ensure that it works when we do it right.

Now that we know what a disciple is, let's take a closer look at Jesus' three-step plan in Matthew 28:19-20 for making disciples.

What does the word *go* mean in Matthew 28:19?

In what ways have you incorporated sharing the good news of Jesus Christ as you go about your everyday life?

In what ways have you intentionally gone to other places to share the good news of Jesus Christ?

GO. Whether we share the good news of Jesus Christ as we go about our day-to-day lives or travel to another town, community, or country, the command is the

KINGDOM DISCIPLES

same. We're to share the good news of Jesus Christ as a natural outgrowth of our lives, whether near or far. This practice is called evangelism.

Evangelism is sharing the good news of Christ's substitutionary death, resurrection, and free offer of forgiveness for sin and eternal life to all who come to Him by faith. Evangelism is done with the clear intent of bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. They must be born again into the kingdom before they can develop into disciples of the kingdom.

Do you view Jesus' command to evangelize others as something only certain Christians should do or as something every believer is called to do? Explain.

BAPTIZE. After we go, the next part of making disciples is baptizing people who've accepted Christ. The point of baptism isn't merely getting people wet. The point is the public declaration of their identification with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

In fact, the primary meaning of the Greek word for *baptism* is "identification." This was a very picturesque word in New Testament days. It was used of dipping a cloth into a dye so that the cloth became completely identified with the dye by absorbing its color. The cloth was immersed in the dye until it took on the character of the dye. The cloth underwent a complete identity change.

When people put their trust in Christ, they become so completely identified with Him that His death and resurrection to new life become their death and resurrection.

Read Romans 6:3-4. What's the result of salvation and the public testimony of that salvation in baptism?

TEACH. The last step in the process of making disciples is teaching others. After people have believed the gospel and have been identified with Christ, we must teach them "to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Our teaching must start with solid content because Christians are people of the truth and people of the Book. Jesus' commands we're to obey are recorded in the Word.

The goal of biblical teaching is to combine information and knowledge with skill in applying the truth to daily life. After Jesus had taught the people and then

THE MISSING KEY

fed four thousand (see Mark 8:1-9), He “immediately” had His disciples get into a boat and head out (v. 10).

According to Mark 8:14-21, Jesus wanted the disciples to apply the lesson they had just learned about His power to meet their needs. Jesus asked them some pointed questions about what they had seen and heard in His provision for the crowd, ending with “Do you not yet understand?” (v. 21). Obviously they didn’t, but you can be sure they thought about it for a long time, and eventually the message got through.

Do you need to be a Bible scholar to teach God’s Word? Why or why not?

What resources are available today to deepen your understanding and application of God’s Word so that you can learn it, live it, and teach it (see Ezra 7:10)?

Making disciples is a process of spiritual development. It’s similar to film processing before we had digital cameras. We took a roll of film called negatives to someone to be developed into positives. Our pictures then looked like they were supposed to, accurately reflecting the images we had sought to capture.

Similarly, God wants to take the negatives in our lives into His darkroom and turn them into positives so that we come out looking like His Son. Discipleship is that process by which we’re developed into the image of Jesus Christ. And making disciples is our role in helping others experience the same transformation.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I accept Your command to go, baptize, and teach others to become like You. I want to do this with my life in every way possible. Give me courage when I need it, open doors I can walk through, and insight and understanding of Your Word. In Christ’s name, amen.