



# DISCIPLES

*what on earth are  
we doing?*

Then Jesus came near and said to them,  
“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.  
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 everything I have commanded you.  
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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Matthew 28:16-20

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Welcome to an important series in the life of our church! On Sundays and over these next five studies we will be unpacking the significance of Jesus' great commission to 'make disciples' (Matthew 28:16-20). We will be considering the implications of Jesus' words for us as a church and as individuals. My prayer is that this series will provide some clarity when answering the basic question '*what on earth are we doing?*'

A few important disclaimers need to be made before we look at these studies.

- 1. These studies are written for Christians**, that is those who see Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. If you are reading and participating in these studies and you do not yet see Jesus as your Lord and your Saviour, it is wonderful that you are with us! Please continue to check out the life of Jesus, particularly the significance of his death and resurrection for you. It is also important to note that Jesus' commission is not intended to be the requirement for someone to *become* a disciple (aka a Christian). We are a grace, not works, driven community. Jesus' words are best understood as addressing those who are already his disciples, answering the question 'so what are we to do now?'
- 2. These studies will use the phrase 'make disciples' a lot.** This phrase will be unpacked throughout the series. As we will see, *making disciples* refers to more than simply 'making converts'. What we typically refer to as 'evangelism' plays a huge role in disciple making, but there is more to making disciples of Jesus than the activity of evangelism. The activity of making disciples includes growing disciples of Jesus.

### Sunday teaching

**Sunday 11 February**

Why are we called to make disciples?

**Sunday 18 February**

What is a disciple of Jesus?

**Sunday 25 February**

How is a disciple of Jesus 'made'?

**Sunday 3 March**

Who makes disciples of Jesus?

**Sunday 10 March**

Where are disciples of Jesus made?

**Sunday 17 March**

Growing together as disciples of Jesus (no study)

## Leading these studies

As always, prayer needs to undergird this series. Particularly because this series is highly practical, we are to be cautious of neglecting to commit these studies to prayer, both in our home group meetings and in our preparation. In terms of leading the studies, depending on your group, you may or may not be able to cover all the material. These studies are intended to be geared towards allowing a good amount of time to discuss and clarify the answer to the big question, based on the passages presented in each study. Make sure your group doesn't drift towards one of two unhelpful outcomes - first, it would be unhelpful if your group spends all your time in the text and leaving little space to seriously think through how the text answers the big question and what it might look like in practice; second, it would be unhelpful if your group skipped over the text, assuming they already know what the bible is saying and jump straight to a discussion of implications, based on pre-existing assumptions. You will need to ensure you get the balance right for each study that you spend enough time in both the text and practical discussion. Ensure that the discussions flow out of the text.

## Resources

These studies have been put together using a couple of helpful resources:

Marshall, C (2018) *Making Disciples*, Matthias Media

Marshall, C & Payne, T (2016) *The Vine Project*, Matthias Media

If you or your group would like to go deeper into some of these discussions, I recommend checking out the resources above via [matthiasmedia.com.au](http://matthiasmedia.com.au)

# 1. WHY MAKE DISCIPLES?

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## Share

1. If you had to summarise **our church culture** in just a few words, what would it be?
2. What do you think are the **key habits, activities and traditions** of our church that express and reinforce our culture?

## Observe & reflect

3. **Read** Matthew 28:16-20
  - a. What does Jesus say about himself?
  - b. What is the connection between what Jesus says about himself and why his disciples should make more disciples?
  - c. When it comes to the activity of disciple making, what is reassuring about Jesus' words?
  - d. Why might Jesus' words apply to all disciples of Jesus and not just the eleven disciples with him at the time?
4. **Read** some of the following passages:
  - a. Revelation 7:9-17
  - b. Hebrews 12:18-24
  - c. Titus 2:11-14
  - d. Colossians 1:13-20
  - e. Ephesians 1:1-14
  - f. Romans 8

In each passage, what do you learn about:

- The end towards which God is moving everything (including us)?
- The place of Jesus Christ in God's plans?
- The significance of Jesus' death for God's plans?
- Humanity's place in God's plans?
- Why making disciples is important?

5. Why do you think many churches lose motivation and urgency for making disciples of Jesus? How would you describe your own urgency for the task? And that of our church?

### Bringing it together

6. How many ways can you truthfully finish this sentence:

*'At St Mark's we seek to make disciples because ...'*

## 2. WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

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### Recap & Share

1. What did we learn last week, in answer to the question 'why do we seek to make disciples at St Mark's?'
2. What do you think of when you think of the word 'disciple'? What do you think a disciple of Jesus is?

### The word 'disciple'

The word 'disciple' simply means '**a learner**'. It implies being a **student**, or an **apprentice** of someone. So we are thinking about what it means to be a learner, student, apprentice of Jesus.

### Observe & reflect

3. **Read** the following passages where Jesus explains what it means to be his disciple:
  - Matthew 10:16-33
  - Mark 8:31-38
  - Luke 14:25-33.

For each passage consider the following:

- A. What do disciples need to learn about Jesus?
- B. What are the consequences of learning Christ in this way?
- C. Why is it inconsistent to 'learn Christ' and not subject our whole life to his will?
- D. What alternative masters does Jesus highlight?



7. Discuss each of the following common views of discipleship. What truth, if any, do they express? Where might they be inadequate or wrong?
- a. “Discipleship is a second stage of the Christian experience that happens sometime after conversion. You can be a Christian but it's only the dedicated and committed people who are disciples.”
  - b. “Discipleship is an intentional ministry strategy or program - like one-to-one mentoring, small groups, or a 12 week discipleship course.”
  - c. The essence of discipleship is personal accountability to a discipler. Discipleship is about the kind of trusted relationship where someone keeps us accountable about our personal devotions, church attendance, or avoidance of particular sins.”
  - d. “Preaching is not really about discipling people. It is more to do with proclamation, teaching and exhortation.”

### Bringing it together

8. Have a go at composing your own concise statement of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

*A disciple of Jesus is*

## 3. HOW ARE DISCIPLES MADE?

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### Recap & Share

1. What have we learnt so far about why we seek to make disciples at St Mark's & what a disciple of Jesus is?
2. How would you describe the way disciples are 'made'?

### Observe & Reflect

3. **Read** the whole of 1 Thessalonians

*This will take about 12-15 minutes if you read the whole book aloud with your group. Alternatively, if time is limited, you could divide your group into pairs to read a chapter each, discuss the questions below and report back to the group.*

- a. Write down everything that mentions how people become Christians and how people mature as Christians.

	The means by which people become Christians &/or mature as Christians
Chapter 1	
Chapter 2	
Chapter 3	
Chapter 4	
Chapter 5	

- b. Try to summarise the table above in a sentence or two...
- c. Is this what we believe? Is this what we practice? Why? Why not?

## Bringing it together

### The four Ps<sup>1</sup>

The making of disciples is first and foremost God's work, achieved as his word and Spirit work through the activity of the disciples and in the hearts of those they speak to. And yet in his sovereign kindness, God invites us and commands us to be part of this work. Putting together all that we've seen in this study, we can capture God's 'method' of making disciples, and our part in that work, by the 'four Ps':

- **P**roclamation of the word of God
- **P**rayerful dependence on the Spirit of God
- **P**eople as God's fellow workers
- **P**ersevering, step by step

Or, in one sentence: *Disciples are made by the persevering proclamation of the word of God by the people of God in prayerful dependence on the Spirit of God.*

from 'Making Disciples' by Colin Marshall (p40)

4. Think of someone you know who might be finding life hard or need some encouragement in this fallen world.
  - a. Pray about a way God could use you to help this person take their next step towards Christ and maturity in Him.
  - b. How could you demonstrate your love for them?
  - c. What truth about Christ could you share with them?
  - d. What scripture would help them know Christ and mature in Him?
  - e. What might stop you from taking any action?

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<sup>1</sup> This is a helpful summary of the New Testament's teaching on how disciples are made from Making Disciples, by Colin Marshall (p40).

## 4. WHO MAKES DISCIPLES?

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### Recap & Share

1. What have we learnt so far about why we make disciples at St Mark's, what a disciple of Jesus is and how disciples of Jesus are 'made'?
  
2. If (hypothetically) we were able to tally up every piece of communication that happens by St Mark's members to
  - other St Mark's members,
  - members of their household,
  - members of their local community & relational network
  - a. How much of this would actually involve speaking (or paraphrasing) the word of God (ie the promises of God, in Christ Jesus, found in the pages of the bible)?
  - b. Why do you think this is the case?
  - c. What are the reasons and occasions when we might speak the word of God to others?
  - d. What are the main reasons why people in churches are not engaged in speaking the word to others in the church, home or community?

### Who makes disciples?

In light of the previous studies we have looked at, the answer to the question before us today ('who makes disciples?') is fairly simple - *all Christians are called to make disciples of Jesus*. Even though disciple making will look quite different, for different people, in different contexts, there are still a bunch of things common to all disciple making activities (see previous study) regardless of the context and the people involved. Today we are considering why disciple making is an activity entrusted to all disciples of Jesus, and not just a select few. It is a privilege for all Christians.

## Observe & Reflect

3. Look again at Matthew 28:16-20

a. What evidence can you see within these verses that Jesus intended all his disciples, not just the first eleven, to be disciple-makers?

b. What truths should make us passionate & confident about making disciples of Jesus, even if we feel a lack of ability and experience?

4. Look at a selection of the following texts

- 1 Thess 5:11-14
- Heb 13:7-15
- 1 Peter 2:9-12
- 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Titus 1:7-9, 2:1-10
- Ephesians 4:11-29
- Colossians 3:12-17

a. What do you learn in each one about the nature of speaking the word, and the different form it takes?

b. What various reasons or motivations are given for all learners (disciples) of Jesus to be speaking and sharing the word to others?

## Bringing it together

When we envisage the culture of St Mark's church as a place where more of our members are passionate about making disciples through sharing the message of Jesus, we are not talking about a loud and abrasive church or speakers who do not know how to listen. Spend some time brainstorming with your group what a loving community of gospel sharers might look like. What would we see less of? What would we see more of?

## 5. WHERE ARE DISCIPLES MADE?

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### Recap & Share

1. What have we learnt so far about why we make disciples at St Mark's, what a disciple of Jesus is, how disciples of Jesus are 'made' and who makes disciples?
2. When we think of *where* discipling happens, we often think more of a private, one-to-one context, outside of a church gathering. How have these studies broadened your understanding of *where* disciples are actually made?

### Observe & Reflect

3. How does Matthew 28:16-20 answer the question as to *where* disciples are made?

Noting that 'nations' refers more to 'all people' (Jew + non-Jew, rather than exclusively overseas countries), let's now consider what it might look like for a church like ours to have a heart for all people, everywhere to grow as disciples of Jesus.

4. **Read** Acts 10:9-35

- What change of heart and understanding did God achieve in Peter?

5. **Read** Acts 10:36-48

- After Peter preaches the gospel to those present, what happens next?

6. **Read** 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 10:31-11:1

- How did Paul deal with ethnocentric, tribal, inward-looking thinking and behaviour in himself and in churches?
- What might a similar transformation in thinking and behaviour look like in our church?

## Bringing it together

7. Think of as many subcultures or communities you are in contact with (individually and as a church)
  - a. How 'effective' are we at reaching out to *make disciples of Christ* in these communities?
  - b. If some people from these communities came to our church, what would they find helpful or unhelpful about our current church gatherings?
  
8. Making & growing disciples of Jesus happens in:
  - a. The gathered church community
  
  - b. The household
  
  - c. The local community, those we are direct contact with.
  
  - d. The nations, those we are not in direct contact with.

For each of these contexts what do you think it means for us at St Mark's to be invested in the call to make disciples?

HOME GROUPS  
at St Mark's