

growing disciples

discipleship in the New Testament

SIX-SESSION BIBLE STUDY ON LUKE-ACTS

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INTRODUCTION

“What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?”

This study will seek to base an answer on the way Jesus interacted with his first disciples. We will focus on Jesus’ interaction with his disciples as it is revealed by the physician, Luke, in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. In these sessions we will look at both the way the disciples first came to follow and how they grew in their relationship with Jesus.

The purpose of this study is to go beyond simply understanding Jesus’ ministry with his earliest followers. The goal is to look at our own discipleship in light of Jesus’ relationship with his first disciples. Even more, we want to discover how that relationship can grow in depth and practice as we follow Jesus. An added value of this study is that it may help you also look at, evaluate and perhaps even change the way new disciples enter and are nurtured toward discipleship and membership in your congregation.

The call to discipleship is an invitation to journey with Jesus. This journey involves many steps. As disciples follow, they move from an early childlike relationship with Jesus to a deeper commitment of faith and practice. Like a toddler’s first tentative steps, the disciples’ walk is not always predictable or necessarily in one direction. Some steps move the disciple forward, some backward, and some may not seem like directional steps at all. While there is a sense of progression to this journey called discipleship, it is important not to get stuck in “step language.”

The six sessions of this study invite you to a deeper walk with Jesus through an examination of six key components of discipleship — *Followers, Learners, Ministers, Living Examples, Witnesses, and Leaders*. As we work through this study, we will want to recognize the progression as one that leads to deeper levels of commitment. At the same time, we want to affirm the winsome work of the Holy Spirit, who always seems to delightfully surprise us by inviting people into the journey at different places along the way. As you move through this study, you will be invited to open yourself to the power of the Spirit, working through the Word, to move you along your journey toward maturity in your relationship to Jesus as his disciple.

This study does not present a “canned” program. Rather, it is designed to help you see Jesus’ direction for every disciple — and for you. It is meant to help congregations develop new strategies that will help all members move toward becoming faithful disciples and leaders in the church of Jesus Christ. As we move on this journey, we have to be willing to sometimes lose our balance, sometimes take steps that are less than perfect. We may even fall along the way. But as we journey together, as we grow by the power of the Spirit, we will be more able to become what Jesus is calling us to be — *disciples*. We are “Little Christs,” as Luther saw it; those who are willing to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

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