COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE
18

Foundations *of* Discipleship

STUDY GUIDE 7 OF 7:

Growth, Maturity And Multiplication

An overview of growing stronger and helping others grow.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

Content

PREFACE
INTRODUCTION: GROWING UP IN JESUS CHRIST
DISCIPLESHIP IN THE FAMILY OF GOD
RECEIVING CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE
SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION AND MULTIPLICATION
THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN GROWTH AND DISCIPLESHIP
THE COST OF CONTINUING WITH CHRIST
THE MARKS OF A TRUE DISCIPLE
A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF FAITHFULNESS
SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD
THE LIFESTYLE OF A MATURE DISCIPLE
GROWING BEYOND SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD
MATURITY BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS
GROWING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST
SERVING AND BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP
THE MISSION CONTINUES TO THE WORLD
MULTIPLICATION THROUGH EXAMPLE AND SACRIFICE
CONCLUSION: GROW, BEAR FRUIT AND HELP OTHERS GROW
MODULE CONCLUSION: FROM NEW LIFE TO MATURE DISCIPLESHIP

Important Points

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- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

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Windows: Ctrl + F | Mac: Cmd + F | Phone or tablet: use Search in your PDF reader.

PREFACE

BACK TO CONTENTS

This final Study Guide in the Foundations of Discipleship module brings us to the subject of spiritual growth, maturity and multiplication. The previous Study Guide considered what it means to follow Jesus Christ and help others follow Him. We now turn to the kind of disciple we should become as that life continues to develop.

Discipleship does not end at the point of beginning. The born-again believer is called to grow into holiness, responsibility, fruitfulness and maturity in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:28**:

> *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"*

The word *"perfect"* carries the thought of maturity and completeness. The goal is not spiritual childhood, but a life that becomes increasingly stable, fruitful and useful in the body of Christ.

Spiritual growth involves learning to receive correction and remain faithful through testing. It also involves walking in the Spirit of Christ, serving others, developing discernment and taking responsibility for helping others grow.

Spiritual maturity also produces multiplication. A mature disciple does not live only to receive, but increasingly becomes concerned with strengthening and helping others.

Spiritual maturity therefore produces responsibility for others and a desire to see the truth of Jesus Christ continue through another generation of believers. What has been received should eventually become something that helps someone else grow.

This Study Guide will therefore bring together three important ideas:

- Growth: Becoming stronger in Jesus Christ;
- Maturity: Becoming stable, responsible and increasingly governed by the life of Christ within;
- Multiplication: Helping the truth of Jesus Christ continue in others.

These three ideas belong together. The disciple grows towards maturity, and that maturity increasingly produces fruit that strengthens others.

The aim is not simply to finish another Study Guide. The aim is to grow into a mature disciple whose life bears lasting fruit for Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should growth in Christ produce fruit for others?

Personal Reflection

Have you judged your spiritual maturity mainly by how much you know or how long you have believed? What evidence of growth might you be overlooking?

Action Step

Have you measured spiritual maturity mainly by knowledge or time as a believer? What needs to change in your understanding, and how will you strengthen another person through the life of Christ within?

INTRODUCTION: GROWING UP IN JESUS CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

The new birth is the beginning of spiritual life, not the end of spiritual growth. Every born-again believer begins as a spiritual child, but God's purpose is that we grow into maturity in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:28**:

> *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"*

The goal is maturity. A mature disciple is not simply someone who has been saved for many years or who knows a large amount of Scripture.

Spiritual maturity is seen in stability, obedience, discernment, holiness and love. It is also seen in an increasing willingness to accept responsibility and help others grow.

Growth Requires Continuing

Many people begin the Christian life with enthusiasm, but discipleship requires more than a good beginning. The disciple must continue.

Growth involves:

- Remaining in the Word;
- Accepting correction;
- Learning through trials;
- Walking in the Spirit of Christ;
- Serving others;
- Developing discernment;
- Becoming increasingly fruitful.

Discipleship is not about remaining comfortable, but about transformation. Growth may expose weaknesses, require change or demand perseverance, but these things are part of becoming mature in Jesus Christ.

The disciple therefore continues even when growth is difficult. We remain teachable, receive correction and allow Jesus Christ to keep shaping our lives through His Word.

We Do Not Grow Alone

Spiritual growth is personal, but it is not isolated. God places believers within His spiritual family, where they can receive encouragement, teaching, correction and care from others.

The Church is a body in which the members strengthen and care for one another. A growing disciple therefore learns not only to receive from the body, but also to contribute to the spiritual growth of others.

Maturity brings increasing responsibility. As we become stronger in Jesus Christ, we should become more able and willing to strengthen someone else.

The Spirit of Christ Produces Growth

Spiritual maturity cannot be produced by human effort alone. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer as the Holy Spirit, and His Spirit works through the Word to teach, correct and produce His character within us.

Growth is therefore not about becoming increasingly independent of Jesus Christ. The disciple does not mature by reaching a place where His strength, wisdom or direction are no longer needed.

The more mature the disciple becomes, the more completely the life should depend upon and reflect Jesus Christ. True maturity produces greater dependence upon Him, not less.

Maturity Should Produce Fruit

A child naturally grows towards adulthood. In the same way, a disciple should grow from continually receiving towards becoming able to help others.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

Maturity therefore leads naturally towards fruitfulness and multiplication. What the disciple has received and learned begins to strengthen other believers.

The disciple grows and becomes stable. As maturity develops, the disciple becomes increasingly able to help others grow.

This Study Guide will examine that journey. We will consider how the disciple continues growing towards spiritual maturity and becomes increasingly fruitful in Jesus Christ.

The purpose is not simply to become older in the faith, but to become mature in Jesus Christ: steadfast in truth, fruitful in life and increasingly able to strengthen others.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does new life in Christ lead toward maturity?

Personal Reflection

Where do you find it difficult to accept that growth may require correction? Why?

Action Step

Where have you stopped expecting your choices or attitudes to be corrected? What change is needed in your response to God's Word, and how will you begin walking in that truth?

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Bible describes the Church as more than a gathering or organisation. The Church is the household of God, made up of those who have been born again and brought into one spiritual family in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:19**:

> *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"*

Every born-again believer belongs to this spiritual household. We are no longer strangers, but members of the family of God through Jesus Christ.

Paul also wrote in **1 Timothy 3:15**:

> *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*

The Church is the household of God, the body of Christ, and the pillar and ground of the truth. Discipleship is therefore not intended to be lived in isolation, but within the spiritual family into which God has brought us.

Spiritual Fathers and Mothers

In a healthy family, those who are mature care for those who are younger. The same principle applies within the spiritual family of God.

Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 2:11**:

> *"As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,"*

Mature disciples can help younger believers through teaching, encouragement, correction and example. Their greater experience should become a means of strengthening those who are still growing.

This is not about control or creating dependence upon another person. A spiritual father or mother should always point the younger believer towards Jesus Christ and help them become stronger in His Word.

Paul described this kind of relationship in **1 Corinthians 4:15**:

> *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."*

Paul did more than instruct believers. He nurtured them and cared deeply about their spiritual growth.

Timothy also benefited from the faith and example of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their influence helped establish him in truth from an early age and shows how spiritual influence can operate within natural family relationships as well.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The family of God also includes brothers and sisters who walk together in faith. Fellowship within the body should therefore reflect genuine care and affection towards one another.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:10**:

> *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"*

Brotherly love is practical. Believers encourage one another, bear burdens, rejoice together and help one another remain faithful.

The Christian life is not intended to become an individual journey where every person looks only after their own spiritual needs. As members of one family, we should become concerned for the spiritual welfare of others.

Love Binds the Family Together

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:14**:

> *"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."*

Love holds the spiritual family together. Without love, discipleship can become cold and mechanical, even when the teaching itself is correct.

With love, teaching becomes patient and correction becomes restorative. Service becomes willing, and fellowship becomes a means of strengthening and encouraging one another.

Jesus Christ showed this servant love throughout His life. His life within the born-again believer should produce the same love towards others.

Hospitality and Practical Care

Spiritual family should also become visible through practical care. Believers should be willing to make room in their lives for others and respond when genuine needs arise.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 13:2**:

> *"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."*

Hospitality is more than providing food or opening a home. It expresses an open heart towards others.

The early believers shared meals, opened their homes and helped one another in times of need. Their spiritual fellowship became visible through practical acts of care.

Discipleship therefore includes practical care as well as spiritual teaching. Sometimes helping another believer grow involves listening, encouraging, sharing time or meeting a practical need.

A Family That Grows

A healthy spiritual family welcomes new believers, nurtures them and helps them grow towards maturity. Those who have become stronger should become increasingly willing to strengthen those who are still growing.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:10**:

> *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

Every born-again believer has a place in this family. Some are young in the faith, some are growing, and some have become mature enough to take greater responsibility for helping others.

Yet all belong for the same reason: they belong to Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity does not make one believer more a member of the family than another, but it should make that believer more able to serve the family.

Discipleship in the family of God means belonging, growing, caring for one another and helping each member become stronger in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the family of God matter for a disciple's growth?

Personal Reflection

Have you tried to mature without receiving help from other believers?

Action Step

Have you tried to grow without receiving help from the spiritual family? What has held you back, and how will you seek and give encouragement in a way that honours Christ?

RECEIVING CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual growth requires more than encouragement. A mature disciple must also be willing to receive correction and discipline. Correction is not rejection. When given rightly, it is an expression of love designed to help us grow.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 3:11-12**:

> *"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."*

God does not correct His children because He has abandoned them. He corrects because He loves them and desires their growth.

Do Not Refuse Correction

How we respond to correction reveals much about spiritual maturity. A person who refuses all correction will find it difficult to grow because weaknesses and wrong attitudes remain unchallenged.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 15:10**:

> *"Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die."*

King Saul gives us a serious example of resisting correction. When Samuel confronted him, Saul attempted to justify his actions rather than honestly accepting responsibility for what he had done.

The disciple should therefore learn to ask, *"Is there truth in what I am being told?"* We should examine correction carefully rather than immediately rejecting it because it is uncomfortable.

Pride immediately defends itself, but humility is willing to listen. The humble disciple examines the matter in the light of God's Word and is willing to change when correction is needed.

Correction Within the Spiritual Family

God may use other believers to help us recognise areas that need correction. Within the spiritual family, those who are mature should care enough to help restore someone who has gone wrong.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:1**:

> *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."*

Notice the purpose: *"restore such an one."* Correction is not intended to humiliate, embarrass or control someone because its purpose is restoration.

Paul himself corrected Peter when Peter's conduct did not agree with the truth of the Gospel. He also addressed serious problems among the Corinthians rather than ignoring them.

Truth sometimes requires difficult conversations. However, correction must always be carried out *"in the spirit of meekness."*

The person giving correction must also remain humble. We correct another believer while remembering our own dependence upon Jesus Christ and our own need to remain teachable.

Discipline Trains the Life

Discipline includes more than being corrected after doing something wrong. It also describes the training that develops faithfulness, consistency and endurance in the life of a disciple.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:11**:

> *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."*

Discipline may be uncomfortable, but it can produce stronger character, greater self-control and endurance. It also helps develop faithfulness and the *"peaceable fruit of righteousness."*

Daniel provides a good example of disciplined living. His regular prayer and continuing faithfulness prepared him to stand firm when opposition came.

Spiritual maturity develops through consistent obedience rather than occasional enthusiasm. The disciple learns to continue faithfully even when obedience requires effort or personal discipline.

Correction Is Not Condemnation

It is important to distinguish correction from condemnation. Condemnation leaves a person without hope, while correction identifies what is wrong and points towards change.

Jesus said in **John 8:11**:

> *"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."*

Jesus did not ignore the sin, but neither did He leave the woman in despair. He gave clear direction for the way forward: *"go, and sin no more."*

Peter also experienced restoration after denying Jesus. His failure was serious, but Jesus did not abandon him or allow that failure to become the end of his discipleship.

Peter was restored and again entrusted with responsibility. His life shows that failure can be corrected and that the disciple can continue growing when there is repentance and a willingness to follow Jesus Christ.

The goal of biblical correction is therefore repentance, restoration and growth. Correction identifies what needs to change and helps the disciple return to the right way.

A Mature Disciple Remains Teachable

No disciple reaches a point where correction is no longer necessary. Spiritual maturity should make us more teachable rather than more convinced that no one can correct us.

The mature believer remains humble enough to listen, examine the Word and change when needed. Correction is brought under the authority of Scripture rather than accepted or rejected simply because of the person giving it.

Likewise, when correcting others, we must remember our own dependence upon Jesus Christ. We are not standing above another believer as though we have no weaknesses of our own.

Maturity is not proved by never needing correction. It is often revealed by how we respond when correction comes.

The disciple who receives correction with humility allows Jesus Christ to continue shaping the life. Through correction and discipline, the believer can continue growing towards greater faithfulness, holiness and maturity in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can correction and discipline serve growth?

Personal Reflection

Which correction have you resisted or dismissed?

Action Step

Recall a correction you found difficult to receive. Why did you resist it, and what will you do to examine it honestly and respond with humility where it is right?

SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION AND MULTIPLICATION

BACK TO CONTENTS

From the beginning, God designed life to reproduce. This principle also helps us understand spiritual fruitfulness. A mature disciple should not only grow personally, but should also help the life and truth of Jesus Christ continue in others.

Moses wrote in **Genesis 1:28**:

> *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:"*

On the natural level, God commanded humanity to be fruitful and multiply. Spiritually, this provides an important picture of discipleship because what Jesus Christ produces in us should become a blessing to others.

The Pattern of Multiplication

Paul gave Timothy a clear pattern for spiritual multiplication. Truth was to pass faithfully from one disciple to another.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

This verse shows four generations: Paul, Timothy, faithful people and others also. Paul taught Timothy, and Timothy was to teach faithful people who would then become able to teach others.

Truth therefore continues from one disciple to another. What one believer receives, understands and lives can eventually become something that helps many others.

The Bible contains several examples of this pattern. Moses prepared Joshua, who later led Israel, while Elijah prepared Elisha to continue the work. Jesus taught the Twelve and then sent them to make disciples.

Spiritual multiplication occurs when those who have been taught become able to help others. The truth does not stop with the person who first receives it.

Fruitfulness Is a Mark of Maturity

Children naturally grow towards adulthood. In the same way, spiritual children should continue growing towards maturity and fruitfulness.

Jesus said in **John 15:8**:

> *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."*

Fruitfulness is closely connected with discipleship. A growing disciple should increasingly become able to strengthen and help others.

The believers at Thessalonica provide a powerful example. They received the Gospel, but what they received did not remain with them.

Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 1:8**:

> *"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."*

Notice the words *"from you sounded out the word of the Lord."* Their faith became visible and influential beyond their own congregation.

They had received truth and were now helping that truth reach others. Their spiritual life had become fruitful.

We Reproduce Through Example

Spiritual multiplication does not happen through teaching alone. The life of the disciple-maker also becomes part of what another person sees and learns.

Jesus said in **Luke 6:40**:

> *"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."*

The disciple is shaped by the example being followed. This means that those helping others must consider carefully what kind of example their lives provide.

Paul understood this when he wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:1**:

> *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

Paul's example was valuable because it pointed others towards Jesus Christ. He was not seeking to reproduce his own personality, but to show through his life what it meant to follow Christ.

If we want others to pray, they should see prayer valued in our lives. If we want others to serve, they should see a servant heart, and if we want them to love truth, they should see us living according to truth.

We reproduce not only what we teach, but also what we live. The life of the disciple-maker should therefore support the truth being passed on.

Multiplication Requires Sacrifice

Helping others grow takes time, patience and effort. Spiritual fruitfulness requires a willingness to give something of ourselves for the good of another person.

Jesus said in **John 12:24**:

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*

Fruitfulness involves giving rather than living only for ourselves. Discipling another person may require time that could have been used elsewhere, along with repeated teaching, prayer and encouragement.

It may also require patience while another believer works through questions, weaknesses or difficulties. Paul laboured sacrificially for those he served, and the early believers willingly used what they had for the good of others.

A mature disciple therefore becomes increasingly willing to invest in another person's spiritual growth. The desire for fruit becomes greater than the desire for personal convenience.

Fruit That Continues

Spiritual multiplication is not about building our own following. The goal is that the truth of Jesus Christ continues through others.

A disciple grows and becomes established in truth. That disciple then helps another person, who also grows and eventually becomes able to help someone else.

This is spiritual multiplication: one disciple faithfully shares truth, teaching, encouragement and a lived testimony with another. Spiritual life itself is received directly from Jesus Christ through the new birth. Each growing disciple remains centred upon Him while becoming increasingly able to strengthen others.

Maturity therefore does not end with personal growth. The mature disciple begins to bear fruit that reaches beyond their own life.

A mature disciple bears fruit, and that fruit begins to bear fruit also.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does spiritual reproduction differ from simply gathering followers?

Personal Reflection

Have you invested what you learned in someone else?

Action Step

What truth have you kept for yourself that could help another disciple? What will you change in your willingness to serve, and how will you share and live that truth alongside them?

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN GROWTH AND DISCIPLESHIP

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual life begins with the new birth. The disciple is born of the Spirit, and that Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwelling within. Growth and maturity therefore cannot be produced by education, religious activity or human effort alone.

Jesus said in **John 3:6**:

> *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

The Spirit gives life where there was spiritual death. The born-again believer does not receive the Holy Spirit as a later second experience because Jesus Christ comes to dwell within at the new birth.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Paul identifies the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ. The disciple belongs to Christ because the Spirit of Christ dwells within.

The Spirit Teaches the Disciple

Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost would teach His disciples and bring His words to their remembrance. The Spirit would continue the work of Jesus Christ within His people.

Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

The Holy Spirit does not lead the disciple away from Jesus Christ. He reveals Christ and brings His words to remembrance.

Jesus had already promised His disciples, *"I will come to you."* The Spirit who teaches within is therefore not another divine person separate from Jesus Christ, but Christ Himself dwelling within His people by His Spirit.

The disciple still reads and studies Scripture carefully. However, spiritual understanding depends upon the Spirit of Christ working within and helping the believer understand and receive the truth of His Word.

The Spirit Produces His Fruit Within

Spiritual maturity should become visible through the life of the disciple. Paul describes these qualities as the fruit produced by the Spirit.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 5:22-23**:

> *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

Notice that Paul calls this *"the fruit of the Spirit."* These qualities are not produced simply by outward rules or human determination.

As the disciple walks in truth and yields to Christ within, His life should increasingly become visible through the believer. Love, patience, faithfulness and self-control should continue to grow.

Spiritual maturity therefore allows the life of Jesus Christ within to become increasingly visible through the disciple. The life already received within begins to be expressed more clearly without.

The Spirit Empowers Witness

Jesus also promised His disciples power to become witnesses of Him. Their testimony would not depend upon human confidence or natural ability alone.

Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**:

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

These words were fulfilled when Jesus came to His disciples as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The disciples who had previously been fearful became bold witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The same Spirit of Christ now dwelling within the born-again believer gives strength to live and testify faithfully. The life of Christ within gives power to the testimony.

The Spirit Joins Believers Into One Body

The Spirit of Christ not only gives spiritual life to the individual believer. At the new birth, the believer is also brought into Christ and therefore into His body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

This baptism is spiritual. God brings the born-again believer into the one body through the same Spirit received at the new birth.

There is not one Spirit for one group of believers and another Spirit for someone else. There is one Spirit, and every born-again believer receives the Spirit of Christ.

This is the spiritual foundation of the unity of the body. Believers belong together because the same Jesus Christ dwells within His people by His Spirit.

Growth Remains Dependent Upon Christ

The mature disciple never becomes independent of Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity should produce greater dependence upon Him rather than greater confidence in ourselves.

We need His Spirit to understand truth and produce godly character. We also depend upon Him to strengthen our witness and maintain spiritual unity within His body.

Growth therefore does not mean learning to live without dependence upon Jesus Christ. It means becoming increasingly governed by the One who already lives within.

The Spirit received at the new birth remains the source of spiritual life throughout discipleship. The believer grows, learns and matures from the life already received in Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of Christ gives life at the new birth, teaches the disciple, produces His character, empowers witness and brings every born-again believer into one body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Spirit of Christ shape the manner of growth and disciple-making?

Personal Reflection

Where has ambition or self-reliance replaced dependence on Him?

Action Step

Is self-reliance or ambition affecting the way you grow or lead others? What must change, and how will you allow the character of the indwelling Christ to govern your next act of service?

THE COST OF CONTINUING WITH CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Following Jesus Christ is not a casual decision. Discipleship requires surrender, obedience and a willingness to continue even when following Him becomes costly.

Jesus said in **Luke 14:27**:

> *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."*

The disciple is called to follow Jesus Christ rather than self. This means laying aside personal ambition and allowing His will to govern the direction of our lives.

Nothing Can Come Before Christ

Jesus continued in **Luke 14:33**:

> *"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."*

This does not mean that every believer must literally dispose of every possession. It means that nothing we possess can be allowed to hold a place above Jesus Christ.

Abraham left his homeland when God called him, while Moses chose to suffer with God's people rather than remain surrounded by the treasures of Egypt. The first disciples also left their nets when Jesus called them to follow Him.

Each example involved a willingness to leave something behind in order to obey God. The particular cost differed, but the principle remained the same.

The disciple must therefore ask, *"Is there anything I am unwilling to surrender if obedience to Jesus Christ requires it?"* Christ must have first place.

Following Christ May Bring Opposition

Jesus warned His disciples that faithfulness could bring resistance. Following Him does not guarantee that everyone will understand or approve of the choices we make.

Jesus said in **John 15:20**:

> *"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."*

Jeremiah suffered because he faithfully spoke God's Word, and Paul endured opposition, imprisonment and hardship. The early believers also faced persecution because of their testimony of Jesus Christ.

The disciple should therefore not assume that every difficulty means something has gone wrong. Sometimes opposition comes precisely because we have chosen to remain faithful.

Maturity is seen in the willingness to continue following Jesus Christ when faithfulness is tested. The disciple remains established in truth rather than allowing opposition to determine the direction of the life.

Obedience Over Comfort

Following Jesus Christ will sometimes require choosing obedience over personal comfort. The disciple must learn that what Jesus Christ desires is greater than what feels easiest.

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:24**:

> *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."*

Noah obeyed despite the response of those around him, while Daniel continued praying even when it placed his life in danger. Their obedience was not governed by comfort or by the approval of others.

Jesus Himself prayed in **Luke 22:42**:

> *"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."*

These words express the spirit of surrender: *"Not my will, but thine, be done."* The disciple learns to bring personal desires under the will of God and continue in obedience.

The Cost Is Real, but Christ Is Greater

Discipleship may cost time, comfort, possessions, reputation or relationships. Yet the disciple does not measure the value of following Jesus Christ only by what must be surrendered.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 1:21**:

> *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Paul had discovered something greater than everything he had lost. He had Jesus Christ.

Jesus also spoke about what may be surrendered for His sake. He said in **Mark 10:29-30**:

> *"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."*

Jesus did not promise a life without difficulty because the same verse includes *"with persecutions."* The point is that nothing surrendered for Jesus Christ is greater than what the disciple has received in Him.

The disciple therefore does not continue because the path is always easy. We continue because Jesus Christ is worthy, and the life we have received in Him is greater than anything we may be required to surrender.

Spiritual maturity is seen when the believer remains faithful through difficulty, opposition and sacrifice. The mature disciple continues following Jesus Christ because the question of who holds first place has already been settled.

The cost of discipleship is real, but Jesus Christ and the life we have received in Him are greater.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does continuing with Christ cost when growth becomes difficult?

Personal Reflection

Where have you considered withdrawing from costly obedience?

Action Step

What cost of following Jesus have you been tempted to avoid? What does that reveal about your priorities, and how will you continue in one clear act of obedience?

THE MARKS OF A TRUE DISCIPLE

BACK TO CONTENTS

A true disciple is recognised not only by what is professed, but also by the life that follows. Jesus identified clear marks that should become increasingly visible in those who follow Him.

These marks do not earn salvation. They are evidence of the life already received in Jesus Christ and should become increasingly visible as the disciple grows towards maturity.

Continuing in the Word

Jesus said in **John 8:31**:

> *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;"*

Notice the word *"continue."* Discipleship is not a brief interest in Scripture or simply a decision made at one moment in the past.

The true disciple continues in the Word. We read it, study it, believe it, allow it to correct us and live according to it.

The Word becomes a continuing foundation for the life. As the disciple matures, truth should become increasingly established in both understanding and conduct.

Loving One Another

Jesus gave another unmistakable mark of His disciples. The life of Christ within should produce love towards others.

Jesus said in **John 13:35**:

> *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

Love makes discipleship visible. It moves beyond words and becomes practical in the way believers treat one another.

John later wrote in **1 John 3:18**:

> *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

True love becomes action. We encourage, serve, forgive, bear burdens and seek the good of others.

Knowledge alone cannot demonstrate the life of Jesus Christ. The truth we know should be accompanied by the love of Christ expressed through the life.

Bearing Fruit

Jesus also connected discipleship with fruitfulness. A growing disciple should not remain spiritually unfruitful.

Jesus said in **John 15:8**:

> *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."*

Fruitfulness includes the character of Jesus Christ becoming increasingly visible within the believer. It also includes the spiritual influence of that life upon others.

The Thessalonian believers provide a strong example. Their faith became known beyond their own congregation because the Word of the Lord sounded out from them.

Fruitfulness means that the life of Christ within does not remain hidden or inactive. His life begins to affect others through us.

Taking Up the Cross

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**:

> *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

The cross speaks of surrender. The disciple learns to place the will of Jesus Christ above personal comfort, ambition and self-interest.

Stephen remained faithful even when his testimony cost him his life, while Paul also lived sacrificially for the Gospel. Their circumstances were different, but both demonstrated a willingness to remain faithful when discipleship became costly.

Not every disciple will face the same circumstances. However, every disciple must learn the same controlling principle: Jesus Christ comes first.

Obeying Jesus Christ

Obedience is also a mark of discipleship. The purpose of learning the Word is not simply to know what Jesus Christ has commanded, but to live according to His truth.

Jesus said in **Matthew 28:20**:

> *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

Notice the word *"observe."* Jesus did not command His disciples simply to teach others to know His words, but to teach them to live according to what He had commanded.

Knowledge without obedience produces little spiritual growth. The mature disciple learns to bring beliefs, conduct, relationships and decisions under the authority of Jesus Christ.

These Marks Should Continue to Grow

No disciple should read these marks simply to judge other people. We should first allow them to examine our own lives.

We should ask whether we are continuing in the Word and whether love is becoming increasingly visible. We should also consider whether our lives are bearing fruit, whether we remain willing to deny self and whether we are obeying what Jesus Christ teaches.

These marks should become increasingly clear as the disciple matures. Growth does not mean that we have reached perfection in every area, but there should be continuing evidence that the life of Jesus Christ is shaping us.

A true disciple continues in the Word, loves others, bears fruit, takes up the cross and lives in obedience to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Which marks of a true disciple should become visible over time?

Personal Reflection

Which mark is weak in your present conduct?

Action Step

Which mark of discipleship is least visible in your conduct at present? What attitude or habit needs changing, and how will you express the life of Christ through a practical response?

A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF FAITHFULNESS

BACK TO CONTENTS

Discipleship is not a single decision made at the beginning of the Christian life. It is a daily walk with Jesus Christ through every season of life. Growth takes time, trials will come, and faithfulness must continue.

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**:

> *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

Notice the word *"daily."* The disciple continues choosing to follow Jesus Christ day after day.

Discipleship therefore requires continuing faithfulness. We do not follow Jesus Christ only when the way is easy, but continue walking with Him through every season of life.

Growth Comes Step by Step

Spiritual maturity does not appear overnight. The disciple grows through continuing in the Word, learning through experience, receiving correction and walking faithfully with Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote in **2 Peter 3:18**:

> *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."*

The first disciples themselves grew gradually. At times they misunderstood Jesus, struggled with fear and failed to understand what He was teaching.

Yet as they continued with Him, they became stronger and more faithful. Their maturity developed as they continued learning and following Jesus Christ.

Timothy also grew from a younger believer into someone trusted with significant responsibility. His growth took place over time as he received truth, remained faithful and accepted increasing responsibility.

A disciple who keeps walking with Jesus Christ should keep growing. Spiritual maturity develops step by step as we continue with Him.

Trials Are Part of the Journey

The journey of discipleship includes testing. Difficulties can reveal areas where faith needs to become stronger and teach the disciple to endure.

James wrote in **James 1:12**:

> *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*

Trials can strengthen endurance and reveal the condition of our faith. The disciple learns to remain faithful even when circumstances become difficult.

Joseph endured betrayal, slavery and imprisonment, yet remained faithful. Paul also experienced opposition, hardship and imprisonment, but continued serving Jesus Christ.

Difficulties therefore do not always mean that we have left the right path. Sometimes they are part of the process through which faith, endurance and character become stronger.

Finishing Matters

A good beginning is important, but the disciple must also continue faithfully. Spiritual maturity includes perseverance rather than beginning strongly and later turning away.

Near the end of his life, Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul could look back and say that he had remained faithful. He had faced many difficulties, but he continued until his course was finished.

Caleb provides another example of continuing faithfulness. Even in old age, he remained strong in faith and ready to continue possessing what God had promised.

The disciple should therefore desire not only to begin well, but also to finish well. The whole journey matters.

Keep Looking to Jesus Christ

The writer of Hebrews gives us the key to perseverance. Our attention must remain upon Jesus Christ throughout the whole journey.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:2**:

> *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

When difficulties come, we continue looking to Jesus Christ. When progress seems slow or correction is needed, our attention must remain upon Him.

When strength is required to continue, we depend upon Him. Spiritual maturity does not mean that we eventually become able to continue without Jesus Christ.

The opposite is true. The mature disciple learns more deeply to depend upon Jesus Christ throughout every season of life.

Discipleship is therefore a lifelong journey of daily surrender, gradual growth, endurance through testing and continuing faithfulness to Jesus Christ. We begin with Him, grow in Him and continue depending upon Him.

The goal is not simply to start following Jesus Christ. The goal is to continue with Him faithfully throughout the whole journey.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is faithfulness a lifelong journey rather than a short course?

Personal Reflection

Where have you relied on an earlier commitment instead of following now?

Action Step

Have you relied upon a commitment made long ago instead of following Christ faithfully today? What will you correct in your priorities, and what consistent response will you renew?

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

BACK TO CONTENTS

A mature disciple learns to live with a Kingdom perspective. Jesus Christ must have first place, and His reign must shape our priorities, values and decisions.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**:

> *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

The Kingdom is not an extra part of life. It is the centre of life under the reign of Jesus Christ.

To seek the Kingdom first means that the disciple learns to place God's righteousness above personal ambition, possessions, comfort and earthly recognition. Our priorities begin to reflect what Jesus Christ values rather than simply what benefits us naturally.

Strangers and Pilgrims

The believer should not become so attached to this present world that earthly things control the heart. We live here and carry earthly responsibilities, but our deepest loyalty belongs to Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:13**:

> *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."*

Abraham lived as a pilgrim, trusting God and looking beyond immediate circumstances. His life was not governed only by what he could naturally see or possess.

The disciple should develop the same outlook. We live in this world, fulfil our responsibilities and care faithfully for what God has entrusted to us, but our deepest loyalty belongs to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Kingdom Values Are Different

The values of the Kingdom often oppose the values of the world. The world may exalt pride, power, position and wealth, while Jesus teaches humility, service, righteousness and faithfulness.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:10**:

> *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

A disciple may therefore need to choose what is right even when that choice brings personal cost. Kingdom values are not changed simply because obedience becomes difficult.

Moses made such a choice when he valued the things of God above the treasures of Egypt. He chose according to a greater value than immediate earthly advantage.

Kingdom living therefore asks, *"What does Jesus Christ value?"* rather than simply, *"What will benefit me?"*

Set Your Affection Above

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:2**:

> *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."*

The disciple must continually guard the heart against becoming controlled by temporary things. Possessions, success and comfort may have a place in life, but they must never become the purpose of life.

Jesus Christ is greater than these things. He must remain the centre.

This does not mean ignoring earthly responsibilities. It means handling those responsibilities faithfully without allowing them to become the master of our lives.

The Kingdom Is Present Now

The Kingdom of God is not something postponed entirely into the future. Jesus taught that the Kingdom was a present spiritual reality.

Jesus said in **Luke 17:20-21**:

> *"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."*

The Kingdom is not identified by outward observation or a physical location. Jesus Christ reigns now within His born-again people.

His Kingdom becomes visible as His people live in obedience, righteousness, love and truth. The life of the disciple should therefore demonstrate the rule of Jesus Christ within.

The disciple does not wait for some future age before living under the reign of Jesus Christ. We live under His rule now.

Live With the Kingdom First

A mature disciple learns to examine daily priorities in the light of the Kingdom. We should consider whether Jesus Christ truly holds first place and whether His Word governs our choices.

We should also ask whether we value righteousness above personal advantage and whether our lives are being directed towards His purposes rather than simply our own. These questions help keep discipleship centred where it belongs.

Seeking first the Kingdom affects the whole life. Our ambitions, possessions, relationships, decisions and priorities all come under the reign of Jesus Christ.

Seeking first the Kingdom means living under the present reign of Jesus Christ and allowing His righteousness, values and purpose to govern the whole life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does seeking God's Kingdom first change what you treat as important?

Personal Reflection

Which lesser concern has ruled your time or decisions?

Action Step

Which lesser goal has begun directing your time or choices more than Christ's Kingdom? What will you reorder, and how will that change be visible this week?

THE LIFESTYLE OF A MATURE DISCIPLE

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual maturity should become visible in daily life. A mature disciple does not only understand truth; that truth begins to shape habits, conduct, priorities and relationships.

Five important areas help us understand the lifestyle of a mature disciple: prayer, the Word, holiness, service and witness. Together, they show what a life increasingly centred upon Jesus Christ should look like.

A Life of Prayer

Jesus taught that prayer should be a continuing part of the disciple's life. Prayer keeps us dependent upon God rather than upon our own wisdom and strength.

Jesus said in **Luke 18:1**:

> *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"*

Jesus Himself regularly withdrew to pray, and the early Church continued steadfastly in prayer. A mature disciple therefore does not pray only when difficulties arise.

Prayer becomes part of daily fellowship with Jesus Christ. We bring our needs, decisions, burdens and thanksgiving before Him and continue depending upon Him in every part of life.

A Life in the Word

The Word of God guides the disciple's thinking and conduct. As maturity develops, Scripture should become increasingly established as the standard by which the disciple understands truth and makes decisions.

David wrote in **Psalm 119:105**:

> *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

A mature disciple continues reading, studying and applying Scripture. Growth does not remove our need for the Word, but should produce an even greater desire to understand and live according to it.

Jesus answered temptation with the Word of God, while the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether what they heard was true. The Word therefore becomes a continuing source of direction, correction and strength.

A Life of Holiness

Spiritual maturity should also produce a growing desire for holiness. The disciple belongs to Jesus Christ, and the life should increasingly reflect His character.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 1:15-16**:

> *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."*

Holiness is not an outward attempt to appear religious. It is the life of a person who belongs to Jesus Christ.

Joseph demonstrated this when he refused temptation because he understood that sin was ultimately against God. His response was governed by his relationship with God rather than simply by the possibility of being discovered.

Maturity should therefore produce a stronger desire to live in purity, righteousness and obedience. The life within should increasingly become visible through the way the disciple lives.

A Life of Service

Jesus Christ is the pattern of service. His life demonstrated humility and a willingness to give Himself for others.

Jesus said in **Mark 10:45**:

> *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

The mature disciple does not continually ask, *"Who will serve me?"* As the servant heart of Jesus Christ develops within, the question increasingly becomes, *"How can I serve?"*

Service may be spiritual or practical, public or unseen. What matters is that it flows from humility, love and a genuine desire to help others.

Maturity therefore moves the disciple beyond continually receiving. As we grow stronger, we should become increasingly willing and able to strengthen others.

A Life of Witness

The disciple's life should also provide a clear testimony of Jesus Christ. What we say about Him should be supported by the way we live.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16**:

> *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

Witness includes our words, but it also includes our conduct. People observe the way we respond to difficulty, treat others, work, serve and live according to what we profess.

A mature disciple therefore seeks to make sure that the life supports the testimony of the mouth. The Christ we confess should become increasingly visible through the life we live.

Maturity Becomes Visible

Spiritual maturity cannot remain hidden only in what we know. It should become visible through consistent prayer, faithfulness to the Word, holiness, humble service and a clear witness of Jesus Christ.

These practices do not earn salvation or make the believer more complete in Christ. They are expressions of the new life already received in Jesus Christ.

As the disciple matures, that life should become increasingly visible in ordinary daily living. Prayer, truth, holiness, service and witness begin to show the continuing work of Jesus Christ within.

The lifestyle of a mature disciple is a life increasingly shaped by Jesus Christ in prayer, truth, holiness, service and witness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What daily pattern belongs to a mature disciple?

Personal Reflection

Which part of your lifestyle still contradicts your confession?

Action Step

Examine your regular habits, speech and relationships. Where is the life you profess least visible, and what repeated choice will you change rather than simply make another promise?

GROWING BEYOND SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD

BACK TO CONTENTS

Every disciple begins the Christian life as a spiritual child, but God does not intend His children to remain spiritually immature. The disciple is called to grow in understanding, stability, discernment and responsibility.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:14-15**:

> *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"*

Spiritual childhood is not the goal. The mature disciple becomes increasingly established in truth and less easily moved by every new teaching or influence.

Stability in the Truth

One characteristic of spiritual childhood is instability. Paul describes children as being *"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."*

A mature disciple learns to examine teaching carefully through the Word of God rather than accepting everything that sounds convincing. As truth becomes established, the disciple becomes less easily influenced by changing ideas or persuasive personalities.

The goal is not suspicion or pride. The goal is stability in Jesus Christ and His Word.

Discernment Develops Through Use

Spiritual maturity also includes growing discernment. The disciple learns to recognise the difference between truth and error and between good and evil.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 5:14**:

> *"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

Notice the words *"by reason of use."* Discernment develops as the disciple learns Scripture, applies truth and exercises spiritual judgement consistently.

Daniel demonstrated this kind of maturity when he stood firm in Babylon. He remained faithful to God even when surrounded by pressure to compromise.

Maturity therefore becomes visible through conviction, wisdom and self-control. The disciple learns to make decisions according to truth rather than simply following the pressure or opinions of others.

From Receiving to Giving

Spiritual children naturally need to receive. They need teaching, encouragement, guidance and care while they become established in Jesus Christ.

Growth, however, should eventually produce the ability to help others. The disciple should not remain permanently dependent upon someone else for every answer.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 5:12**:

> *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."*

There comes a point when the disciple should begin moving from continually receiving towards becoming able to give. Truth that has been received and understood should eventually become something that can strengthen someone else.

Moses prepared Joshua until Joshua was ready for greater responsibility. Paul also taught Timothy and eventually entrusted him with responsibility for helping others.

Maturity produces responsibility. As the disciple grows stronger, that strength should increasingly become a means of helping others grow.

Trials Can Produce Maturity

Growth does not occur only through teaching. Trials can also become part of the process through which the disciple develops endurance and greater dependence upon Jesus Christ.

James wrote in **James 1:4**:

> *"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

Job's understanding of God deepened through severe testing. Peter's failure also became part of his growth when Jesus restored him and he continued faithfully.

Trials can expose weakness and develop endurance. They can also show the disciple where greater trust, patience or spiritual strength is needed.

The mature disciple therefore learns through both instruction and experience. Difficulties do not have to stop growth when they cause us to depend more deeply upon Jesus Christ.

The Goal Is Maturity in Christ

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:28**:

> *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"*

The born-again believer is already complete in Jesus Christ concerning salvation. Spiritual maturity does not make us more saved, nor does it mean that we later receive something necessary to complete what Christ has already given.

Complete means complete.

Spiritual maturity concerns the growth and development of the life already received. The life we already possess in Jesus Christ becomes increasingly established and visible in the way we think, discern, live and serve.

The disciple grows beyond instability and becomes established in truth. Discernment develops, responsibility increases and the disciple becomes increasingly able to strengthen others.

Spiritual maturity means growing beyond childhood into a stable, discerning and responsible life in which the life of Jesus Christ within is increasingly expressed.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What shows that a believer is growing beyond spiritual childhood?

Personal Reflection

Where do you still depend on others to make a decision you should own?

Action Step

When have you let someone else make a decision for which you must take responsibility? What does the Bible teach, and how will you act with spiritual maturity and dependence upon Christ?

MATURITY BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual maturity is not only about becoming stronger personally. A mature disciple begins to take responsibility for helping others grow in Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 5:12**:

> *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."*

These words show that growth should eventually move a believer from continually receiving towards becoming able to help others. The disciple who has been taught and strengthened should eventually become able to strengthen someone else.

From Learner to Helper

Every disciple begins as a learner. We need teaching, encouragement and correction, and we need others to help us understand the Word.

However, that should not remain our permanent condition. As we grow, we should become increasingly able to help someone else.

This does not mean that every mature disciple becomes a public teacher. It means that we should increasingly become capable of:

- Explaining Scripture;
- Encouraging another believer;
- Praying with someone;
- Helping someone recognise error;

- Modelling faithfulness;
- Guiding a younger believer towards greater maturity.

The mature disciple begins to look beyond personal growth and asks, *"Who can I now help?"* What has been received begins to become useful in strengthening another person.

Moses and Joshua

The relationship between Moses and Joshua provides a clear biblical example. Joshua spent years learning while Moses led Israel, and over time he was prepared for greater responsibility.

Moses said to Joshua in **Deuteronomy 31:7**:

> *"And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it."*

Joshua did not remain permanently dependent upon Moses. He learned, grew and eventually became ready to carry responsibility himself.

This is an important goal of discipleship. The person being helped should become increasingly established, responsible and able to follow God faithfully.

Paul and Timothy

Paul followed the same pattern with Timothy. Their relationship was close, but Paul's purpose was not to keep Timothy permanently dependent upon him.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 1:2**:

> *"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Paul taught Timothy, prayed for him, encouraged him and entrusted him with responsibility. Timothy then became able to teach and strengthen others.

This is the pattern of spiritual maturity. A mature believer helps another disciple become strong in Jesus Christ and increasingly able to serve others faithfully.

Healthy discipleship therefore prepares people for responsibility. It does not build permanent dependence upon the person who first helped them.

Maturity Requires Responsibility

Spiritual maturity is not measured only by how much Scripture we know. It is also seen in how responsibly we use what we have received.

If Jesus Christ has taught us truth, we should become able to share that truth with others. If He has strengthened us through difficulty, what we learned may help us encourage someone facing a similar trial.

If we have learned how to pray, study, serve and walk faithfully, those lessons can become a help to others. The things Jesus Christ has taught us should make us increasingly useful within His body.

What we receive should eventually become something we can give. Maturity turns personal growth into increasing responsibility for the spiritual good of others.

Spiritual Fathers and Mothers

This is how mature disciples begin to function as spiritual fathers and mothers. They care about the growth of younger believers and willingly invest in helping them become established.

They nurture and guide, while also encouraging and teaching. When correction is necessary, they correct with patience and a desire for restoration.

The purpose is never to control another believer. The purpose is to help that person mature in Jesus Christ.

A spiritual father or mother should therefore continually point the growing believer towards Christ and His Word. As that believer matures, they should become increasingly able to stand faithfully and eventually help someone else.

Spiritual maturity produces responsibility. The disciple grows from being helped to becoming able to help others grow in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does maturity bring responsibility for others?

Personal Reflection

Whom could you help but have left unsupported?

Action Step

Whom are you able to strengthen but have left unsupported? What has prevented your care, and what regular encouragement or practical help will you now offer?

GROWING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Church is described in Scripture as the body of Christ. Every born-again believer has a place in that body, and spiritual growth includes learning how to live, serve and care for others within it.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:27**:

> *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."*

The Christian life is not intended to be lived independently. Just as the members of a physical body depend upon one another, believers are joined together in Jesus Christ and should learn to function together as His body.

One Body, Many Members

Paul explained that the body contains different members with different functions. Unity does not mean that every believer has the same ability or serves in exactly the same way.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-5**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."*

Different members may serve in different ways, but all belong to the same body and receive life from the same Spirit of Christ. The differences between members should therefore strengthen the body rather than divide it.

The early Church demonstrated this principle. Some gave themselves particularly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, while others served practical needs.

No faithful service should be regarded as unimportant. Every member has a place, and every member can contribute to the good of the body.

We Need One Another

Paul warned against one member believing that another was unnecessary. Every part of the body has value and contributes something to the whole.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:21**:

> *"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."*

This teaches humility. No disciple possesses every ability or understands everything, and no disciple should believe that spiritual maturity makes fellowship with others unnecessary.

We need the encouragement, service, prayer and example of other believers. Maturity should therefore make us more willing to value the contribution of others rather than becoming spiritually independent.

Mutual Care and Responsibility

Life in the body also involves caring for one another. The members are not joined together simply for personal benefit, but so that each can contribute to the good of others.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:2**:

> *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."*

Barnabas demonstrated this kind of care when he stood beside Saul at a time when others were uncertain about him. Other believers also demonstrated care through generous giving and practical help for those in need.

The body of Christ should therefore be a place where believers encourage and pray for one another. We bear burdens, rejoice together and help one another continue faithfully.

Spiritual maturity produces concern for the whole body rather than self alone. As the disciple grows stronger, there should be an increasing willingness to use that strength for the good of others.

Order and Accountability

The body of Christ is not without order. Scripture shows that some believers carry particular responsibility for teaching, guidance and spiritual care.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 13:17**:

> *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."*

God places responsibility within the Church for teaching, guidance and care. Those who carry that responsibility must also remember that they are accountable for how they serve.

Timothy received instruction from Paul and was charged to remain faithful in doctrine and example. The early believers also continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine rather than treating truth carelessly.

Healthy accountability helps protect truth and strengthen the body. However, human responsibility within the Church must always remain under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word.

Jesus Christ Is the Head

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Jesus Christ is not simply one important part of the Church. He is the Head.

Every believer, every teacher and every responsibility within the body must remain under His authority. No human leader or personality can take the place that belongs to Jesus Christ.

The mature disciple therefore does not seek independence from the body, but neither should the disciple become dependent upon human personalities. We remain dependent upon Jesus Christ while learning to live responsibly with His people.

The body receives its life from Him, and every member belongs because they belong to Him. All service, teaching, care and responsibility should therefore direct attention back towards Jesus Christ.

Growing in the body of Christ means recognising our place, valuing other members, caring for one another and serving together under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does growth in the body of Christ depend on other members?

Personal Reflection

Have you isolated yourself or withheld your contribution?

Action Step

Have you withdrawn from fellowship or withheld what you can contribute? What needs to change in your attitude towards Christ's body, and how will you strengthen another member?

SERVING AND BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual maturity should make a believer increasingly useful to others. The mature disciple does not ask only how the body of Christ can help them, but how they can strengthen the body.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:2**:

> *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."*

Life in the body of Christ involves shared responsibility. When another believer is struggling, discouraged or carrying a heavy burden, mature disciples should be willing to help.

Every Member Can Serve

The body of Christ contains different members with different abilities and responsibilities. These differences do not make one member unnecessary or another member unimportant.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:21**:

> *"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."*

No member should believe that others are unnecessary. Likewise, no believer should think, *"I have nothing to contribute."*

Some may teach, while others may encourage or pray. Some may provide practical help, while others may quietly support someone during a difficult time.

Not every believer will serve in the same way, but every faithful act of service can strengthen the body. What matters is that we use what Jesus Christ has entrusted to us for the good of others.

Love Seeks to Build Others Up

Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:14**:

> *"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."*

Love seeks the good of others. It forgives, serves, encourages and strengthens.

Service should therefore not be driven by pride, recognition or the desire to appear important. The purpose is not to draw attention towards ourselves, but to help another person.

Jesus showed that true greatness is found in humble service. As the servant life of Jesus Christ within is expressed through the disciple, there should be an increasing willingness to serve rather than a concern for position.

Practical Care Matters

The early believers expressed love in practical ways. They shared what they had and responded when genuine needs arose.

Barnabas also demonstrated the value of encouragement when he stood beside Saul at a time when others were uncertain about him. His support became an important expression of care.

These examples remind us that building someone up does not always require a formal teaching opportunity. Sometimes the most helpful service is simple and personal.

It may mean listening or praying with someone. It may mean giving practical help, standing beside someone who feels alone or speaking a word of truth and encouragement at the right time.

Practical care makes love visible. It shows that our concern for another believer reaches beyond words.

Service Should Strengthen the Body

The purpose of service is not to create dependence upon ourselves. It is to help others become stronger in Jesus Christ.

A mature disciple should therefore ask, *"Will what I am doing strengthen this person in Christ?"* This helps keep service centred upon its proper purpose.

Service should direct people towards Jesus Christ rather than towards our personality. Encouragement should strengthen faith, while teaching should establish truth.

Practical care should express the love of Christ, and correction should seek restoration. Everything should contribute to the spiritual health and strengthening of the body.

Maturity Moves From Receiving to Contributing

Spiritual children naturally need much care. They need others to teach, encourage, guide and strengthen them while they grow.

As believers mature, they should gradually become able to provide care as well as receive it. This is one of the clearest signs of spiritual growth.

The mature disciple still needs the body and continues receiving from others. However, maturity changes the focus so that we no longer think only about our own spiritual needs.

The question increasingly becomes, *"How can I strengthen someone else?"* What we have received from Jesus Christ begins to become something we can use for the good of another believer.

When every member begins to serve in this spirit, the whole body becomes stronger. Believers receive care when they need it and become increasingly able to give that same care to others.

Serving and building one another up is one of the ways the life of Jesus Christ becomes visible through His body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does mature service build others up rather than draw attention to self?

Personal Reflection

When has recognition mattered more than another person's growth?

Action Step

When has the desire for recognition influenced your service? What must change in your motive, and how will you quietly help someone grow through Christ's servant life within?

THE MISSION CONTINUES TO THE WORLD

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual maturity does not turn the disciple inward. The life of Jesus Christ within should reach outward towards others. The disciple learns, grows and becomes established so that the Gospel and truth of Jesus Christ can continue through another life.

Jesus said in **Matthew 28:19-20**:

> *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

The command to make disciples must not be understood as making literal water baptism the means by which a person enters Christ or becomes part of His Church. The New Covenant reality is the spiritual baptism by which the born-again believer is placed into Christ and His body by the Spirit. Water cannot produce the new birth or complete what Jesus Christ has already accomplished.

The mission reaches beyond one congregation, culture or nation. The disciple is called to go, make disciples and teach others to live according to the words of Jesus Christ.

The purpose is not simply to spread information. The Gospel brings people to Jesus Christ, and discipleship then helps them become established in His truth and learn to follow Him faithfully.

Salt and Light

The disciple's mission is expressed not only through words, but also through the life. What we profess about Jesus Christ should become visible in our conduct.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:14-16**:

> *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

Joseph's integrity became visible in Egypt, while Daniel's faithfulness became a testimony in Babylon. Their lives demonstrated faithfulness to God in circumstances where others could see the difference.

In the same way, people should be able to see something of Jesus Christ through the conduct of His disciples. Our words, choices, relationships and response to difficulty should support the truth we profess.

Discipleship is visible. The life of Jesus Christ within should become a testimony before others.

Witness Through the Spirit of Christ

The disciples did not fulfil their mission through human ability alone. Jesus promised that they would receive power to become witnesses of Him.

Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**:

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

Jesus came to dwell within His disciples as the Holy Spirit, and His life empowered their witness. Peter became a bold preacher, while Stephen remained faithful even when facing death.

The same Spirit of Christ dwells within every born-again believer. Our witness should therefore flow from Christ living within, not from human confidence or ability alone.

This means that the disciple remains dependent upon Jesus Christ while bearing witness to Him. The power of the testimony is not found simply in persuasive words, but in the truth being declared and the life of Christ being demonstrated through the believer.

The Gospel Reaches All People

The Gospel is not restricted by nationality, culture or background. Jesus Christ is to be made known wherever God provides opportunity.

The early disciples carried the Word beyond Jerusalem and into other regions. Paul crossed cultural boundaries, and believers who were scattered through persecution continued sharing the Word wherever they went.

Luke wrote in **Acts 8:4**:

> *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."*

The disciple should therefore never think that the truth of Jesus Christ belongs only to one people, culture or place. The Gospel reaches beyond the boundaries that naturally separate people.

Wherever God gives opportunity, the truth can be shared. The disciple should remain willing to bear witness to Jesus Christ and help others understand His Word.

The Mission Continues Through Disciples

Jesus prepared His disciples not only to learn, but also to go. What they had received from Him was to continue through their lives into the lives of others.

Jesus said in **John 20:21**:

> *"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."*

Disciples are not only learners. They are also sent.

One disciple shares Jesus Christ with another person, and that person begins to grow. As that disciple becomes established, they become able to help someone else.

In this way, the truth continues from life to life. Spiritual maturity produces an outward concern that desires to see others know Jesus Christ and become faithful disciples themselves.

A mature disciple does not keep Jesus Christ to himself. His life, truth and love should reach outward so that others may know Him and learn to follow Him also.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the mission continue beyond the local body?

Personal Reflection

Have you limited your concern to people already near you?

Action Step

Has your concern for the Gospel stopped with your immediate circle? What does that reveal about your priorities, and how will you support a faithful effort beyond it?

MULTIPLICATION THROUGH EXAMPLE AND SACRIFICE

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual multiplication does not happen through teaching alone. Disciples also reproduce what they see lived before them. This means that the life of the disciple-maker matters as well as the words being taught.

Jesus said in **Luke 6:40**:

> *"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."*

The disciple is being shaped towards the example being followed. Those who help others grow must therefore continually make sure that their own example points towards Jesus Christ.

Live What You Teach

Paul understood the importance of example. He could encourage others to follow his life because he himself was following Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:1**:

> *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

Paul did not ask people to follow him independently of Jesus Christ. His example was valuable only because it directed others towards Christ.

The same principle applies to every disciple-maker. What we teach should be supported by the way we live.

If we teach prayer, prayer should matter in our own lives. If we teach faithfulness, we should seek to be faithful, and if we teach service, others should see a servant heart.

If we teach love, our relationships should demonstrate love. Our life should support the truth we teach.

An Example Worth Following

Paul also understood that believers learn by observing the lives of other faithful believers. A godly example gives visible form to the truth being taught.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:17**:

> *"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."*

This does not mean that disciple-makers must be perfect before they can help others. It means that they should sincerely seek to live according to the truth they teach and remain willing to receive correction themselves.

A mature disciple should therefore ask, *"If someone followed my example, would it help them follow Jesus Christ more faithfully?"* That question causes us to examine both our teaching and our life.

The goal is not to reproduce our personality or personal preferences in another person. The goal is to provide an example that helps another disciple follow Jesus Christ.

Multiplication Requires Sacrifice

Helping others grow also costs something. Spiritual multiplication requires the disciple to give time, energy, patience and care for the spiritual good of another person.

Jesus said in **John 12:24**:

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*

The seed bears fruit through being given. In the same way, spiritual fruitfulness requires a willingness to give rather than living only for ourselves.

Disciple-making may require repeated conversations and continued prayer over a long period. It may also require explaining the same truth more than once or patiently helping someone through failure, discouragement or difficulty.

Growth does not always happen quickly. Fruitfulness often requires sacrifice and patience.

Paul Gave Himself for Others

Paul's ministry demonstrated this willingness to give himself for the good of others. His teaching was supported by a life of labour and personal sacrifice.

Paul wrote in **2 Thessalonians 3:8-9**:

> *"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."*

Paul laboured because he cared about those he served, and his conduct became an example for them to follow. His life demonstrated the faithfulness and responsibility he was teaching to others.

The early believers also willingly shared their possessions and resources so that others could be helped. Their concern for others became visible through what they were willing to give.

Fruit That Costs Something

Spiritual multiplication is not produced by convenience alone. It requires love that is willing to give for the spiritual good of another person.

Time must sometimes be given, and patience must be exercised. Prayer, strength and attention may need to be given repeatedly as another disciple grows.

Sometimes personal comfort must also be surrendered. However, the purpose is not sacrifice for its own sake because the purpose is fruit.

The mature disciple understands that helping another person grow is worth the investment. What is given in love can help establish another believer who may eventually become able to strengthen someone else.

A mature disciple lives faithfully before others and willingly gives time, strength and care so that other believers may grow in the life they have received from Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can example and sacrifice multiply faithful disciples?

Personal Reflection

What comfort have you protected at the expense of mentoring someone?

Action Step

What personal convenience has kept you from investing in another believer? What will you surrender, and how will you patiently give time and example that direct them towards Jesus Christ?

CONCLUSION: GROW, BEAR FRUIT AND HELP OTHERS GROW

BACK TO CONTENTS

Discipleship is not a short course of study. It is the lifelong calling of every believer to continue growing in Jesus Christ, bear fruit and help others grow.

Throughout this Study Guide, we have seen that spiritual maturity involves much more than knowledge. The mature disciple becomes increasingly stable, responsible, fruitful and useful within the body of Christ.

The mature disciple:

- Grows within the spiritual family of God;
- Receives correction with humility;
- Becomes fruitful;
- Depends upon the Spirit of Christ;
- Remains faithful through trials;
- Continues in the Word;
- Seeks first the Kingdom of God;
- Lives a life of prayer, holiness, service and witness;
- Accepts responsibility for others;
- Serves faithfully within the body of Christ.

These things do not make the believer more saved or more complete in Jesus Christ. They are the developing fruit of the spiritual life already received through the new birth.

Maturity Should Produce Fruit

Jesus said in **John 15:8**:

> *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."*

Growth should eventually become visible. The disciple becomes more stable in truth, and the character of Jesus Christ becomes increasingly evident through the life.

The believer also becomes more willing to serve and accept responsibility for others. What has been received begins to become something that can strengthen another person.

Spiritual maturity therefore moves the disciple from continually receiving towards becoming increasingly able to give. A mature disciple bears fruit that becomes a blessing to others.

The Life of Christ Continues Through Others

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

This gives us the continuing pattern: truth received, truth lived, truth shared and truth multiplied. What Jesus Christ establishes in one disciple should eventually help another disciple become established in Him.

The goal is not to build followers around ourselves. The goal is to help others become faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

As those disciples grow, they also become able to help someone else. In this way, the life and truth of Jesus Christ continue from one believer to another.

Keep Growing

No mature disciple reaches a place where growth is finished. We continue learning from Jesus Christ and receiving correction when it is needed.

We continue depending upon Him, serving others and bearing fruit. Spiritual maturity does not make us independent of Jesus Christ, but should produce deeper dependence upon Him.

The Christian life therefore remains a lifelong journey of faithfulness. We continue growing while also becoming increasingly able to strengthen others.

Growth leads to maturity. Maturity produces responsibility. Responsibility produces fruit. That fruit should help the life and truth of Jesus Christ continue in others.

This is the continuing calling of the mature disciple. Grow in Jesus Christ, bear fruit and help others grow in Him also.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do growth, fruitfulness, and helping others grow fit together?

Personal Reflection

Which part of this cycle is missing in your life?

Action Step

Looking at your growth and influence on others, which part is missing? What change is required, and how will you begin helping another person become established in Christ?

MODULE CONCLUSION: FROM NEW LIFE TO MATURE DISCIPLESHIP

BACK TO CONTENTS

We have now reached the end of the Foundations of Discipleship module. Across these seven Study Guides, we have followed the disciple's journey from the new birth through spiritual growth, service, fellowship, disciple-making and maturity.

The foundation of everything is Jesus Christ. Discipleship does not begin with religious activity, but when a person is born again, receives new life and Jesus Christ comes to dwell within by His Spirit.

From that new life, growth begins. The believer who is already complete in Jesus Christ now learns to walk faithfully in the life received from Him.

From New Life to Maturity

In New Life in Christ, we established that salvation brings genuine spiritual life. The born-again believer becomes a new creature and is complete in Jesus Christ.

In The Word and Faith, we learned that the disciple must continue in God's Word and learn to walk by faith rather than by sight. The Word provides truth, and faith learns to trust Jesus Christ and live according to what He has spoken.

In Prayer, Fasting and Discernment, we considered fellowship with Jesus Christ through prayer and the importance of spiritual discernment governed by the Word of God. The disciple learns to remain dependent upon Him and recognise the difference between truth and error.

In Serving, Stewardship and Giving, discipleship moved outward. Everything belongs to Jesus Christ, and the disciple learns to serve others, manage faithfully what has been entrusted and give with a willing heart.

In Worship, Fellowship and Testimony, we saw that the life of Christ within should be expressed through worship in spirit and truth, fellowship with His people and a testimony that agrees with God's Word. The life received within should become visible through the way the disciple lives.

In Following Christ and Making Disciples, the disciple moved from receiving truth towards helping others follow Jesus Christ. What we learn and live should eventually become something that strengthens another person.

Finally, in Growth, Maturity and Multiplication, we saw that spiritual childhood is not the goal. The disciple should continue growing into stability, discernment, responsibility and fruitfulness.

The Pattern Continues

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:2**:

> *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

This verse brings the whole module together. Truth is received, truth is believed, truth is lived, truth is shared and truth continues through others.

Discipleship therefore does not end with personal knowledge or growth. What Jesus Christ develops within us should eventually become a blessing to someone else.

The disciple who has been taught becomes able to teach. The believer who has been encouraged becomes able to encourage, and the person who has been strengthened becomes able to strengthen others.

Continue Walking in Christ

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:6-7**:

> *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."*

Notice the progression. We receive Christ, and then we walk in Him. We become rooted, built up and established in the faith.

This is the continuing life of discipleship. The believer does not receive Jesus Christ and then move beyond Him towards something greater.

The goal is not to become independent of Jesus Christ. The more mature we become, the more deeply our lives should remain centred upon Him.

Jesus Christ Remains the Centre

Everything in this module returns to one Person. Every part of discipleship begins with Jesus Christ and continues through the life received in Him.

Jesus Christ gives us life. Jesus Christ is the truth we follow. Jesus Christ dwells within by His Spirit.

Jesus Christ teaches us to serve. Jesus Christ joins His people together. Jesus Christ sends us to help others.

Jesus Christ is the One in whom we grow, and His indwelling life is the source of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity should therefore never move the disciple away from Him, but into deeper dependence upon His life, truth and direction.

The journey continues. We receive His life and walk in His Word. We grow in faith, serve in love and share fellowship with His people.

We bear witness to His truth and help others follow Him. We continue growing towards maturity so that the life already received becomes increasingly fruitful.

This is the foundation of discipleship: Jesus Christ living within His people, expressing His life through them and allowing that life to become a blessing to others.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the whole module move from new life toward mature discipleship?

Personal Reflection

Which earlier truth needs renewed practice as you finish the module?

Action Step

As you complete this module, which truth about new life, maturity or serving others needs renewed attention? How will you carry it forward in a sustainable pattern of following and helping others?

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How does growing in Christ lead from personal maturity to bearing fruit and helping others grow? Explain why growth should not end with yourself.

2. Understanding

Why do correction, the Spirit of Christ, and perseverance matter for growth beyond spiritual childhood and responsibility for others?

3. Personal Reflection

Where have you resisted correction or stayed dependent on others when you should be growing in obedience? Give a specific example.

4. Response to Truth

How will you receive a needed correction and use your growing maturity to build up someone in the body of Christ?

5. Action Step

Which habit or attitude has kept your growth centred mainly on yourself rather than Christ and others? What will you change this week to seek His Kingdom first, and when will you begin?

6. Early Response

Have you begun making the change identified in Question 5? If yes, explain your first step and any change in your attitude. If not, explain what has prevented you from beginning.

7. Ongoing Practice

What continuing practice will help you persevere with Christ, bear spiritual fruit, and accept responsibility for another person's growth?

8. Doctrinal Clarity

What marks of a true disciple show genuine spiritual maturity? Explain why age, knowledge, or activity alone cannot prove that a person is mature in Christ.

9. Living the Truth

How will you invest in another person's growth through example, service, and sacrifice while the mission continues beyond your local fellowship?

10. Final Response

Bring together growth in Christ, lasting fruit, and helping others grow. What change do you need to make so that your own growth also strengthens another person?