

## **Introduction to Discipleship and Disciple-Making**

The Anglican Consultative Council's guide to Intentional discipleship and Disciple making states:

***“Intentional or intentionality means making a purposeful commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who also sends us out in to the world to be an instrument of God and God’s love for and in His world. Life shaped by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is a life nourished by prayer and study of scripture, empowered by the Holy Spirit for the life of service (in every sphere of life). One’s whole life, with humility, speaks with boldness in witness to one’s faith in Christ and his love for the world”. (page7)***

A **disciple** is a **learner** or a **follower**. As we seek to follow Jesus, we learn:

- a. who He is;
- b. what He stands for (His teaching)
- c. His love for us and his desire for us to love him and our fellow human beings;
- d. The salvation He won for us and all believers as a direct result of His ministry, His crucifixion, His resurrection and ascension;
- e. The assurance of eternal life for all believers.

## **Four (4) Components of Discipleship**

### **1. Relationship:**

A disciple, lives in the presence of the teacher; shares in personal relationship in his presence. Jesus gives the assurance of his ongoing presence as we genuinely respond to his invitation to follow him. **Matthew 28:20** assures that he will always be with us to the end of the age. In **John 15** Jesus invites us to abide in him as he continues to abide in us. St. Paul confirms us that to be a Christian is to experience life in Christ. The quality of the relationship we enjoy with Christ, depends on our response to Jesus' outreach to us. Jesus is pleased with the attention we pay to him; the way in which we listen to what he has to say to us the ways in which we display the right attitude towards him and our appreciation of all that he offers us in this relationship. God deepens our relationship as we continue in daily prayer and Bible study and in our frequent reception of Jesus in Holy Communion.

In our season of Intentional Discipleship, we focus on deepening our relationship with Jesus, our ever-living Lord and Saviour. God wants all of us to get closer to Jesus.

### **2. Commitment:**

Jesus' call to discipleship was first issued to the first four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John. These disciples made a

commitment to follow Jesus, not knowing the details of the journey with Jesus and they were prepared to follow wherever he led the way. In **Luke 9:57-61**, Luke tells us about three would-be disciples of Jesus who failed to follow him because they were not ready to make the commitment to follow unconditionally. In **John 6**, we read that some disciples failed to keep their commitment to Jesus; they left him because they were unwilling to accept his presentation as the true bread that came down from heaven. In the light of his departure, Jesus asked Peter and the Apostles, “do you also wish to go away?” and Peter replied, “Lord, to whom can we go?” You have the words of eternal life.” Peter’s response was a clear demonstration of his and their commitment to follow Jesus without reservations (**John 6:66-68**).

As we walk with Jesus, we must seek the help of the Holy Spirit to deepen our commitment to follow Jesus, without reservation. Without genuine commitment our journey with Jesus is called into question. Pray for the grace of God to deepen your commitment to Jesus.

### **3. Transformation:**

The lives of the first disciples were radically changed when they accepted Jesus’ invitation to discipleship. As fishermen they fished for fishes, but Jesus changes them to fish for human beings. It is

Jesus that makes the difference. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promises transformation when he greeted Peter “you are Simon, son of John, you are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter). Following Christ always involves a change in lifestyle; “you have heard that it was said.....But I say to you.” Jesus makes non-negotiable claims on conduct and character. We become new persons in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit because we cannot work with Jesus without being impacted by Jesus.

As we walk with Jesus, we must be open to and willing to be transformed into Christlike persons, as the Holy Spirit moves mightily to overcome our tendency to remain in our comfort zones. John 3:7 reminds all of us who wish to follow Jesus that “you must be born from above.” In our walk with Jesus we must all be changed into his likeness. St. Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**.

#### **4. Sacrifice**

Jesus, who invites us to become disciples makes the ultimate sacrifice at Calvary, for us and our salvation, and promises that the journey with him involves the need to make sacrifices. He left the

first disciples in no doubt “whoever does not carry the cross and follow me, cannot be my disciple. (**John 14:27**)

Following Jesus requires us to make tough decisions; we must accept the challenge to choose the way of Jesus as opposed to the way of life under the sphere of Satan. St. Paul, who experienced many trials and tribulations as he sought to be faithful to Jesus who chose him as his apostle, revealed to the Christians at Corinth that he was able to retain a faithful response by relying on the grace of God. “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul invited his fellow Christians to adopt his perspective on the challenges associated with the Christian journey in Christ. “I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ. For whenever I am weak, then I am strong.” (**2 Corinthians 12:8-10**). This perspective is the result of the experience of the all-sufficient grace of God.

As we engage with Jesus, we will encounter challenges and hardships. Let us resolve to follow Paul’s example by trusting in the amazing, all sufficient grace of God. Let us also resolve to use the means of grace given by God in scripture, in his holy sacraments and in our life of prayer. Empowered by the all-sufficient grace of God in Jesus, we can face any and every challenge.

When the first disciples accepted Jesus' invitation to become his disciples, they had the privilege of experiencing his physical presence. In our walk with Jesus, we experience his spiritual presence. Jesus assured all future believers, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (**John 20:29**). The writer of 1 Peter addresses this theme at 1 Peter 1:8 "Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls".

As we engage in our discipleship walk with Jesus, we will face our greatest enemy, the power of sin, the power to choose a way other than God's way. This is our human reality. As we continue in sin, we endanger our relationship with God. St. Paul used a special word for sin, "**Harmatia**" which means "missing the mark". This way of describing sin was taken from the world of "archery" – the use of bow and arrow. We fix a target and seek to hit the mark. God set the standard for his creatures and in our living, we are to aim at hitting God's mark, God's standard. The important issue is the aim that we take determines whether or not we hit the mark. God gives us his mark, his standard, in Jesus, "the way, the truth and the life" (**John 14:6**).

Our challenge is to intentionally and consistently work on our own and aim to hit the mark! In our daily interactions, are we really aiming at God's mark as revealed in Jesus, the Christ of God? In reality, too many of us shoot without taking aim, indicating a lack of purpose and resolve. Our participation in Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making requires us to pay greater attention to our aim so that we may hit God's target, living lives in accordance with God's will and purpose as revealed in Jesus "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (**Hebrews 12:2**).