

**THANK YOU FOR SAMPLING,
"HOW TO BE A MAN: DISCOVERING
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE"**

Men want to follow Jesus in a way that is real and right. But most men don't have a clear picture of how to live this out. *How to Be a Man: Discovering What It Means to Be a Disciple* is a 40-day devotional that teaches men the eight different attributes of disciples. Men will no longer have to ask, "What does discipleship look like?" Each week features five days of devotions that focus on one of the following characteristics of disciples:

- Disciples have been transformed by Christ.
- Disciples surrender to a Gospel-centered life.
- Disciples hunger to know God.
- Disciples desire to worship God.
- Disciples pursue personal holiness.
- Disciples embrace Christian community.
- Disciples engage with their surroundings.
- Disciples invest in multiplying disciples.

Men will read this book and learn, maybe for the first time, what it really means to live a life of discipleship.

If you have any questions about *How to Be a Man: Discovering What It Means to Be a Disciple* (or the Student Edition), please don't hesitate to call us at 1.888.969.6360.

**HOW
TO BE
A DISCOVERING
WHAT IT MEANS
TO BE A DISCIPLE
MAN**



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had that moment in the middle of a conversation where you suddenly realize that you and the individual you're speaking with aren't on the same page? Maybe you're telling a story about a person, and they think you're talking about someone else until a critical detail is shared. Perhaps you're describing a restaurant you both love until one of you realizes you've never actually been to the place you're talking about. Maybe it was a meeting you and a friend both believed you attended, until a specific point where one of you realizes you must not have been there after all. It can be a confusing moment.

Isn't it interesting that two people can think they're talking about the same thing only to find out that they're on two different pages? Unfortunately, when it comes to discipleship, it's a pretty common occurrence.

Discipleship. If you're a man who has spent any time in church, and I hope you have, you've heard the word. Discipleship. We toss it around a lot, but at the end of the day, do men understand what it means? What is a disciple? What does discipleship really look like?

The word "discipleship" means different things to different people. For instance, when you mention discipleship to a church leader, they might think about programs where people gather at specific times and eat donuts, drink coffee, and study the Bible. "Yeah, discipleship. That's Sunday School." While this answer isn't necessarily wrong (Sunday School or small groups can be an important aspect of discipleship), it's incredibly insufficient. Discipleship isn't merely the programs at your church.

For others, discipleship brings to mind an image of meeting one-on-one with someone, learning from them about what it means to go deeper in your faith. This type of mentoring relationship can be an important aspect of discipleship. But again, if this is what you think of when you hear the word, it's not a broad enough definition.

The purpose of this book is to help men know what the word discipleship means. To be a disciple is to be a follower. Period. And so discipleship is followership. Discipleship is the journey, the process, that every Christian undergoes to be a more devoted follower of Christ. Discipleship is Jesus' call on all who would believe in Him. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "[23]Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it" (NIV). Discipleship is the natural result of genuinely committing to a life surrendered to Jesus.

Discipleship is not the exception. There aren't two levels of Christians: Christians and disciples. Nope. Discipleship is God's expectation of everyone who enters into a relationship with Him. It's not an exclusive club for the extra devout, which is an essential truth to process. Because if that's true (which it is), it means you have to KNOW what it means to be a disciple. You have to know what God expects of you.

That's where this book comes in.

This is the third book in the *How To Be A Man* series. The response to the first two books has been, to put it quite plainly, overwhelming. I wish I had time to share with you the stories we continue to hear about what God is doing in men's lives through these books. God is awakening men to the vital role they play in the lives of their family, their churches, and their communities. But for many men, there remains a significant hurdle: They know they are called to discipleship. But they don't know what a disciple looks like.

The purpose of this book is to show men, many for the first time, a picture of a disciple. After spending significant time and energy studying what the Bible has to say about discipleship, we've identified eight characteristics of disciples. Together, these characteristics paint a holistic picture of what it looks like to be a man who is authentically pursuing Jesus. The eight attributes of discipleship are:

- Disciples have been transformed by Christ.
- Disciples surrender to a Gospel-centered life.
- Disciples hunger to know God.
- Disciples desire to worship God.
- Disciples pursue personal holiness.
- Disciples embrace Christian community.
- Disciples engage with their surroundings.
- Disciples invest in multiplying disciples.

How does this picture sit with you? When you evaluate your life against this description of a disciple, how do you match up? Are some of these characteristics evident in your life? Are others lacking? Our purpose for painting this picture is to give you a clear picture of what a disciple looks like. You can't hit a target if you don't know what you're aiming at. But the only problem is that once you know what the goal is, you're accountable for how you go after it.

The purpose of this book is to both equip and challenge you to become an authentic follower of Christ. The men who contributed to this book don't have all the answers. None are perfect. But I know these men personally, and I can tell you that they are deeply committed to their faith. Over the 40 days of devotions in this book, the pathway of discipleship is clearly laid out. As a man seeking to follow Jesus more faithfully, your task is to let these truths speak into your life. God WANTS you to follow Him and His Holy Spirit helps you to do so. Your call is to surrender your will to God, allow Him to change you, and lead out in a deepening commitment to Him.

As you begin this book, let me challenge you not to do so lightly. The stakes are too high for you to be yet another man who has a faith defined by passivity and ambivalence. The world needs godly men engaging with culture, being bold witnesses, living as salt and light.

My prayer, and the prayer of everyone here at Iron Hill Press, is that this book will be a catalyst for taking your faith to the next level. We hope that God works through these words to lead you to a more authentic pursuit of Him.

Andy Blanks
Co-founder/Publisher, Iron Hill Press



WEEK 1:

DISCIPLES

HAVE BEEN

TRANSFORMED

BY CHRIST

I love barbeque. But before I can lay into a pulled-pork street taco, I have to choose the perfect pork shoulder from the butcher.

Maybe you're reading this in your home. Your home didn't just happen. It started with blueprints that guided the build-out process.

Think about a professional athlete. They didn't just arrive. At some point, long ago, they picked up a ball and began to learn the game.

Discipleship is no different. Before we can learn what it means to be a disciple, we have to start at the beginning.

What is the most fundamental aspect of discipleship? Before we can even consider what discipleship looks like, we have to be transformed by a saving relationship with Christ. Discipleship starts with salvation through Jesus' work on the cross. Jesus lived a sinless life and died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins to rescue humanity from the death that sin rightly earns for us (2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 6:23). When we accept Jesus' payment on our behalf by grace through faith, we are transformed (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Don't miss that word. "Transformed." You see, we're not just better versions of ourselves. We're something entirely new. And this "newness" is something we need to explore before we jump into defining what it means to be a disciple. That's what we're going to spend this first week doing.

Let me say a word about this transformed life: This new life is lived by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. It's not lived solely under our effort. And we can't do enough or work hard enough to be good enough. However, Scripture is clear that a transformed life looks a certain way. And we are called to bend our wills and shape our lives to follow Christ in the manner outlined in Scripture. The way we live this out is through our discipleship. But let's spend a few days focusing our attention on what it means to be transformed.

WEEK 1 DAY 1

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: ROMANS 6:1-4

We think we have a good idea of what a transformation is. We see an old, rusty, beater of a car refurbished, and we say it's been transformed. We see someone lose a lot of weight on a TV show, and we say they have been transformed. Maybe we watch one of the many home improvement shows on TV as the host cheerily reveals the home's transformation to the surprised homeowners. It's not that these aren't transformations. It's just that they are not transformed in the biblical sense of the word.

Read Romans 6:1-4. Here, Paul is reacting to an argument some of his opponents were making. They were essentially saying, "if God gives us grace when we sin, then the more we sin, the more grace we get." You don't have to be a biblical scholar to recognize the absurdity of this statement. Paul refuted this argument by appealing to our identities. He said in verse 2 that if we have come to saving faith in Christ, we have died to sin. Sin no longer has mastery over us; as Christ-followers, we are to hate sin. Paul then goes on to paint a powerful picture of transformation in verses 3-4.

Here, Paul makes a profound point. He uses the picture of baptism to describe the transformation we experience when we come to faith in Christ. He says that when a person goes under the water, it's as if they were buried with Jesus and that when a person comes up from the water, it's as if they were raised from the dead. But it's the phrase at the end of verse 4 that should get our attention.

Paul says that anyone who has come to faith in Jesus has been reborn, freed to "walk in newness of life." Of all people, Paul understood this. It's why he can say we're "new creations" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and that our old selves were "crucified" with Jesus (Gal. 2:20). Paul understood that being a Christian means the death of our old self and the birth of something new. This is what it means to be transformed.

Men, embracing the transformation that occurs when we come to saving faith in Jesus is the foundation of what it means to be a disciple. We will never grow into faithful followers unless we embrace the new life Jesus bought for us. We can't live an "old life" faith. We must see clearly who we are in Christ, and with eyes wide open, press forward into the new purpose and vision Jesus has called us to.

CONSIDER THIS

1. Many men have come to faith in Christ but seem to live as if Jesus hasn't made much of a difference in who they are. If we know Jesus transforms us into a new creation, how do you explain Christian men who do not live as if this were true?
2. Describe the most significant difference in your life before and after you embraced the transformation Jesus has brought about in you.
3. Because the point, "Disciples have been transformed by Christ," is foundational, take some time and describe how the transformation Jesus has worked in you has impacted your life and the lives of people around you.
4. Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for the transformation only He can bring. Thank Him that you are a new creation and that He has led you to a place where He is using you to advance His Kingdom. Finish by asking Him to help you be more aware of the areas in your life that reflect more of your old self than the new.

WEEK 1 DAY 2

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: EPHESIANS 4:17-24

Think of the first professional athlete that comes to mind. What are his attributes? How would you describe him? Paul spends a large portion of Ephesians 4 explaining what a life with Jesus and a life without Jesus look like. And just like you can tell a professional athlete by their attributes, you can tell a true disciple by his.

Read Ephesians 4:17-24. Today and tomorrow, we're going to look at Paul's comparison of an untransformed life with a transformed one. Paul is writing to his friends in the church in Ephesus. Paul says to the Ephesians that since they have been transformed by saving faith in Jesus, their lives must be different than the Gentiles who don't know the Lord. Those who don't know the Lord, Paul says, have some distinguishing characteristics:

- Their thinking is futile, and their understanding unclear.
- They are ignorant of the truth of God.
- Their hearts are hardened to the presence of God.
- They pursue pleasure and material comfort with no regard to whether their actions are honorable.

In vs. 20, Paul writes that there can be absolutely NONE of these characteristics in the life of someone who knows Jesus. In verse 22, Paul challenges his readers to adopt a simple approach: just as if you'd take off a jacket when walking indoors, take off this old way of life. Isn't that a simple image? Just take it off! Drop it! Leave your old life behind you like dropping an old coat on the floor. In its place, we're to put on our new self. Like taking one coat off and putting another on, we're to dress ourselves to face the world as a transformed disciple of Christ.

Men, the reason transformation is so critical to discipleship is that our old way of life is "corrupt" (to use Paul's word). We cannot faithfully seek after God as a follower if we're living out of an old, dead way of operating. On the contrary, Paul says the new life that Jesus made possible for us is created to look like Jesus. This is our inheritance as children of God.

To be a follower of Christ, we have to rely on the Spirit, but that doesn't mean we don't have any responsibility. We have the responsibility to act. We have a choice. We can allow the dirty, stained, worn-out coat of our old life to still hang in our closets, where we will occasionally put it on. Or, we can throw it out, once and for all turning our backs to a life of seeking our desires and not God's. The choice is up to you. Jesus paid for a new life that imitates His own. The question is, what life are you "putting on" right now?

CONSIDER THIS

1. If you had to name one major hurdle keeping you from a more authentic followership of Jesus, what would it be?

2. Putting on the "new self" is Paul's way of describing discipleship. It's imitating Jesus in our daily lives. Think of three or four times this week when someone in your life would have recognized something you did as a Christ-like act. How can an awareness of our Christ-like actions lead us to an even greater commitment to pattern our life after Jesus?

3. How is your heart when it comes to listening and obeying God? Is it a pliable heart, one that hears and accepts God's influence? Or is it a hard heart, a stubborn heart that charges down the path of your choosing?

4. We've said the last two days that a transformed life is yours if you have come to saving faith in Jesus. But many men reading this aren't living out a transformed life. For many men, it's because they have a hard heart. If your heart is hardened to God, get on your knees now and pray to God that He would break it. Trust Him that He will. Ask Him to lead you to a place where you are willing to listen and follow.

WEEK 1 DAY 3

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: EPHESIANS 4:25-32

I am a runner. I laugh because God gave me a love of running, but not necessarily the physique of a runner. (Hey, big boys run, too!) I especially love trail running. I've run a ton of short trail races and a handful of marathon and ultra-marathon races. Running a long-distance race isn't easy, but it's not impossible. The secret is building up to it. It requires a lot of effort and discomfort to achieve. But when you cross the finish line, all the hard work is worth it.

Read Ephesians 4:25-32. This is the second day where you will look at Ephesians 4. In this passage, Paul makes a list of what it looks like for a disciple to embrace the transformed life. He starts with a biggie in vs. 25: truthfulness. There is a reason Jesus called Satan the "father of lies" (John 8:44). When we lie, we are aligning ourselves with Satan's values. A man seeking to be a follower of Jesus doesn't lie. A man seeking to be a follower also doesn't lose control of his temper. Anger is a normal reaction in people. But we can be angry and not sin. A disciple controls his anger, especially with those closest to him.

Paul understood honest work. He worked as a tentmaker to support his ministry work, and he worked hard (2 Thess. 3:8). In vs. 28, Paul shows us the purpose of honest work: to be generous with what we earn. In vs. 29, Paul speaks to the language of a disciple. The ONLY words that come out of our mouth should be words that lift up others. For many men, this verse is a healthy dose of conviction. But we should never shrink from the standard God sets before us. In verses 31-32, Paul encourages us to be kind and gracious with others, forgiving them, just as Jesus has done for us.

Does this list overwhelm you? It overwhelms me. I see many things on that list that I fall short of. But I'm glad it's overwhelming. I'm thankful it's a tall task. Because if it weren't, it wouldn't be worth pursuing. If God gave me a picture of what it looks like to follow Him, and it was a standard I could easily grasp under my power, it wouldn't be much of a standard. It's like running a long race. If it were easy, everyone would do it. Our faith requires that we give a lot of ourselves. But the payoff is always worth it.

As men, we should be THANKFUL that God expects so much from us. Why? Because that means that we get to journey together with Him, leaning on the Spirit for help and striving mightily to become who He calls us to be. It's in the striving that we become disciples.

CONSIDER THIS

1. What in Paul's list gave you the most pause? Better question: What are you going to do about it? You have a choice: you can either ignore the Spirit's conviction or act on it. Challenge yourself to listen and obey God's leading. If there is something in that list that is difficult for you, then put the work in. Address it head-on.

2. When I read this list, I am left with a feeling about what a disciple looks like. Think about this list as a whole. In your own words, describe a person who faithfully lives out these attributes.

3. Do you see yourself in the description you just wrote? If you can't answer, yes, it's OK. It just means that you and God have work to do. We are all on a journey toward faithful followership. God is never through with you. He wants you to follow Him faithfully. Spend some time in prayer today, asking God to reveal areas in your life that need refining. Ask Him for the strength to follow through on becoming more like Him. Trust that He is with you and for you.