

## II. What is a Disciple? Are You?

The goal of the “player-coach” is to help each person become a fully devoted follower of Jesus and be involved in the discipling of others. First, we must consider “What is a disciple?”

Jesus answered such a question in very specific ways. Examine the following verses, make any notes you have in the margin, then answer the question, “What is a Disciple?”

Luke 14:26 (NIV) *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate (love less) his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”*

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Luke 14:27 (NIV) *“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”*

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Luke 14:33 (NIV) *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

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John 8:31–32 (NIV) *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”*

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John 13:34–35 (NIV) *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

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John 15:8 (NIV) *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

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**Based upon these statements of Jesus, what is a disciple?**

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**“To Make a Disciple, You Must Be a Disciple!”**

The root word for “disciple” in the New Testament is *mathetes*, which means “a learner or follower.” As you considered how Jesus described a disciple, did God bring anything to mind about your relationship with Him? What is one way you can personally be a better learner or follower of Christ?

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**Paul’s View of Discipleship**

Another way of looking at the role of the player-coach is to compare it with being a “spiritual parent” to “spiritual children.” The apostle Paul took seriously Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:18–20). Let’s look at how Paul cared for people as a spiritual parent in 1 Thessalonians.

**He loved them like a “mother.”**

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 (NIV) *“But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”*

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1 Thessalonians 2:11–12 (NIV) *“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”*

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**He always thanked God for them and continually prayed for them.**

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3 (NIV) *“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

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1 Thessalonians 2:10 (NIV) *“You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.”*

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1 Thessalonians 1:6 (NIV) *"You became imitators of us and of the Lord."*

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**He taught them how to live and please God.**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 (NIV) *"Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus."*

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1 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV) *"Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."*

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**He knew the potential of how God could use them: they became a model for others; they proclaimed the Lord's message; their faith in God became known everywhere.**

1 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (NIV) *"And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere."*

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**He knew the reward.**

1 Thessalonians 2:19 (NIV) *"For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?"*

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*(A more detailed study of 1 Thessalonians can be found in Appendix B – "The Practice of Discipling" on page 82.)*

*Making disciples requires "patient and careful instruction and prayerful and personal guidance of the individual over a considerable period. Disciples are not manufactured wholesale. They are produced one by one, because someone has taken the pains to discipline, to instruct and enlighten, to nurture and train one that is younger."*

—J. Oswald Sanders in  
*Spiritual Leadership*

