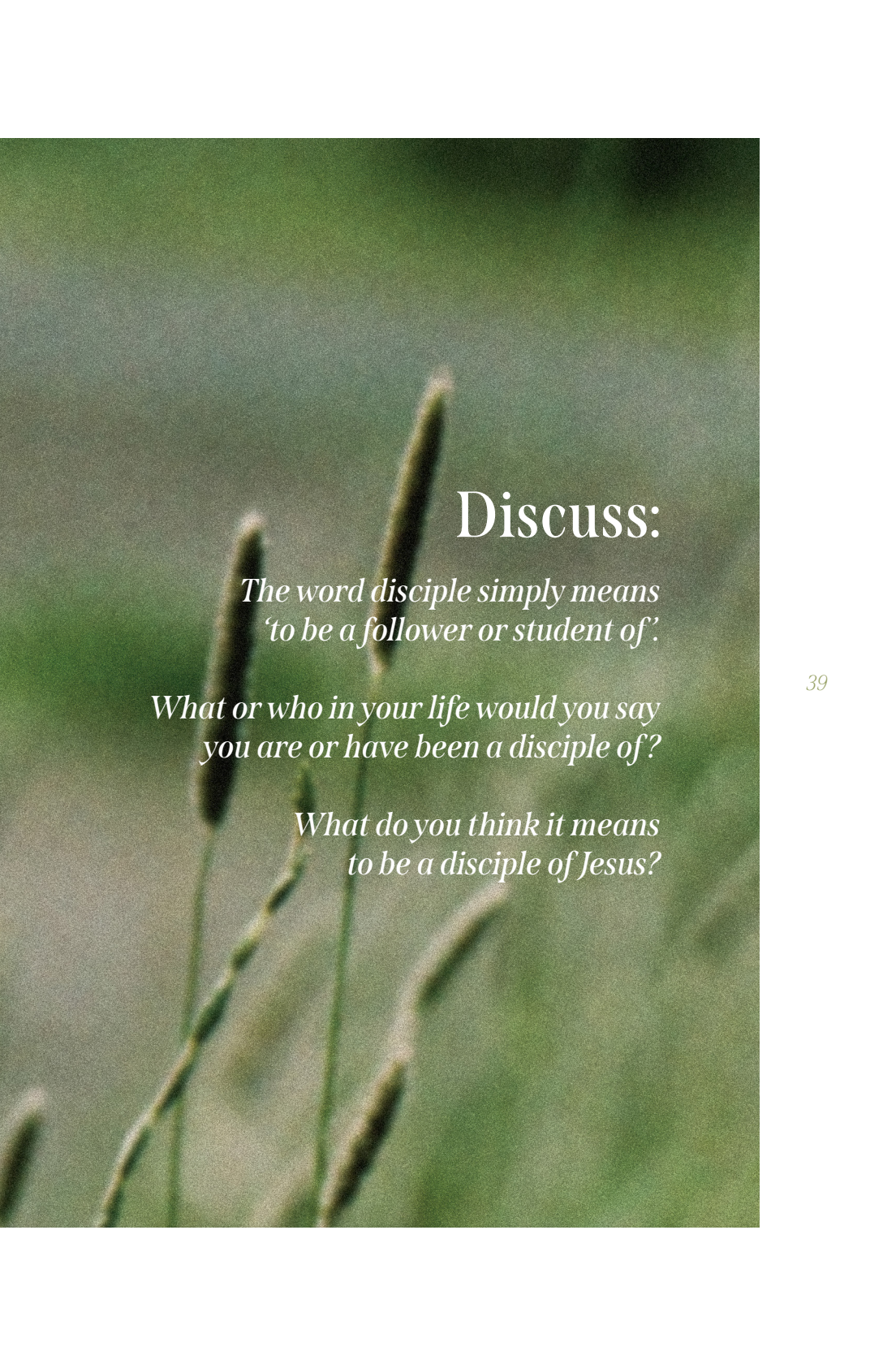


05

Being a Disciple

What does it mean to follow Jesus?



Discuss:

*The word disciple simply means
'to be a follower or student of'.*

*What or who in your life would you say
you are or have been a disciple of?*

*What do you think it means
to be a disciple of Jesus?*

Psalm 139

¹ You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.



¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you. ¹⁹ If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! ²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. ²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? ²² I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. ²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.



Re-read Psalm 139:23-24

Verses 23 and 24 change the tone of the chapter to one of surrender. Most of the chapter delights in the love God has for His children. He created you in His image, knows the plan He has for you, and is always with you. These truths set the foundation that makes the vulnerability of the last two verses possible.

David, the author of this Psalm, desires for God to search and try him because He is certain of God's character and love. Once we know God's character and love, we can trust Him to search us, try us, correct us, and lead us. When we know He is for us, we can confidently surrender ourselves and give Him the permission to change us as He sees fit. In the New Testament, we find Jesus asking for a similar attitude from His followers. At one point in His ministry, Jesus gathers His twelve most committed followers and lays out what He requires of them.

Read Luke 9:23-25

How does this passage impact your view of what it means to be a disciple?

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This is Christ's call to us as well. No one should think that serious faith is only for the select few nor that being a casual Christian – one who decides to accept Jesus but not follow him – is somehow acceptable. Christ made it clear that He wants your life. To deny yourself means denying your right to call the shots; exchanging your plans for where God leads. In the first century, master teachers took on students called disciples in order to teach them all the master knew. The disciple would memorize his teacher's words, imitate his life, and dedicate himself to furthering the master's teachings. Following his master became the disciple's life.

What does it mean to deny yourself and why does losing your life for Jesus actually save it?

As you pray this, what areas in your life are you hesitant to let God into? What are your reservations?

In light of these things, how do you feel about being a disciple of Jesus? You have heard the gospel and you have heard what it requires of you. Are you in?

When Christ calls us to lay down our life, He wants us to give ourselves up to follow after Him. Literally, the picture He used is of us picking up a cross. A criminal only picked up his cross after receiving the death sentence. For all practical purposes, a criminal carrying his cross was a dead man. A dead man has abandoned all earthly hopes and ambitions. Similarly, Jesus is calling us to die to our self – our self-centered desires, self-seeking plans, and selfish ambitions. He wants you to be willing to give those things to Him. If we yield to Him, we can experience life as He intended us to experience it.

What is your reaction to this?

What Christ is asking of you is a difficult thing. It will involve taking up your cross and denying yourself daily. Never forget who it is you are letting search and lead you—a God who loves you, created you, knows you really, really well and wants what is best for you. This is the same attitude David had in Psalm 139, when he invited God to search and change him. Day after day, you will need to do the same. As daunting as this seems, Christ will not abandon you to do this on your own. He gives you the Bible to show you a glimpse of who He is, the Holy Spirit to guide and work inside of you, and a community of other believers to come alongside you as you grow.

ACTION STEPS

Memorize Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Here's some steps to help you memorize scripture:

1. Read it over and over; familiarize yourself with several readings, in different translations even.
2. Write it repeatedly. Incorporating the act of writing helps tremendously in the memorization process. Write it on a note card where you can carry it and routinely review it or place it somewhere you will see it often (e.g. on a mirror, or in your car, put it in your back pocket).
3. Say it, quote it out loud, even tell it to a friend. Verbalizing helps cement it in your memory and helps you own the verse. When we memorize scripture we put it in our head and let God move it to our heart.