

## Commitments and Responsibilities of a Disciple of Jesus

- **Resolves to learn from a maturing disciple how to follow Jesus. Luke 6:40; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9; Hebrews 13:7**
- **Learns and obeys Jesus' words.** Matthew 7:24; Luke 11:28; **John 8:31; 14:15; 15:7,8,10**
- **Learns and applies Jesus' way of ministry.** Mark 10:41-45; **Luke 11:1-4; John 13:15; 20:21; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:21**
- **Imitates Jesus' life and character.** Luke 6:40,46; **John 13:34; 20:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:3-6**
- **Finds and trains others to become disciplemaking followers of Jesus.**  
**Matthew 28:19-20; John 15:8,16; 17:20; 2 Timothy 2:2**

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### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RABBINICAL TRADITION OF DISCIPLESHIP**

(Taken from *The Complete Book of Discipleship* by Bill Hull)

#### **First-Century Discipleship**

The first thought Peter, James, John, and company likely had when they heard Jesus say, "Make disciples," was that they would find and develop other people like themselves. Clearly the apostle Paul believed this years later. All of these men knew that making disciples involved making a serious commitment to follow a leader. Let's briefly look at five characteristics of first-century discipleship.

**1. Deciding to follow a teacher:** Young men could join a variety of schools, each led by a rabbi or a teacher. In some cases, students chose their teacher and, of course, teachers could accept or reject a student's application. If a young man hadn't achieved a certain academic and social status by the time of his bar mitzvah at age thirteen, he would instead choose a life of farming, fishing, carpentry, or the like. The fact that Jesus and his followers were laborers explains why the religious establishment didn't accept them.

The disciple of first-century Judaism learned everything from his teachers. He learned his teacher's stories, his life habits, how to keep the Sabbath his way, and his interpretations of the Torah. And when a disciple learned everything his teacher knew, he then taught his own disciples.

**A disciple's commitment to follow his teacher lies at the heart of the transformational process. Every disciple must make a commitment of submission to at least one other person.** Without this relational dimension, everything that follows is weakened. The teacher-disciple relationship creates a powerful bond that's at least as important and often more crucial than a father-son relationship.

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First-century discipleship was expressed as a servant-master relationship (see Matthew 10:24). Once accepted as a disciple, a young man started as a talmidh, or beginner, who sat in the back of the room and could not speak. Then he became a distinguished student, who took an independent line in his approach or questioning. At the next level, he became a disciple-associate, who sat immediately behind the rabbi during prayer time. Finally he achieved the highest level, a disciple of the wise, and was recognized as the intellectual equal of his rabbi.

**2. Memorizing the teacher's words:** Oral tradition provided the basic way of studying. Disciples learned the teacher's words verbatim to pass along to the next person. Often disciples learned as many as four interpretations of each major passage in the Torah.

**3. Learning the teacher's way of ministry:** A disciple learned how his teacher kept God's commands, including how he practiced the Sabbath, fasted, prayed, and said blessings in ceremonial situations. He would also learn his rabbi's teaching methods and the many traditions his master followed.

**4. Imitating the teacher's life and character:** Jesus said that when a disciple is fully taught, he "will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). The highest calling of a disciple was to imitate his teacher. Paul called on Timothy to follow his example (see 2 Timothy 3:10-14), and he didn't hesitate to call on all believers to do the same (see 1 Corinthians 4:14-16; 11:1; Philippians 4:9).

**5. Raising up their own disciples:** When a disciple finished his training, **he was expected to reproduce what he'd learned by finding and training his own apprentices.** He would start his own school and call it after his name, such as the House of Hillel. These five characteristics describe the institution of discipleship as practiced in the first century. **Jesus used these practices with his closest followers. When he called on them to make disciples, he expected them to find others who would make the five commitments.**

**When Jesus said, "[Teach] them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20), they knew the task would require the kind of dedication found in these five commitments.**

Jesus called the twelve to be with him so they could eventually go out to preach. He graduated them in the upper room when he said, "**I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**" John 15:15