

## New Testament Disciples (Talmidim) – A Definition

**Purpose/Goal:** The goal of this web site to bring clarity to what it means to be an adult disciple (talmid) of Christ and to help a church become an **Intentional Disciple Making (IDM)** church. Many others are also doing the same and I refer the reader to [www.discipleship.org](http://www.discipleship.org). This site is meant to compliment the work of others.

### Why this Note

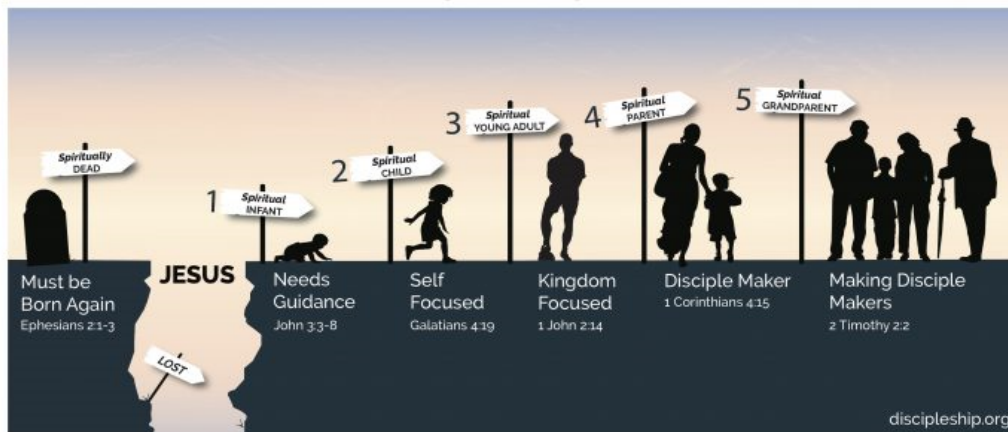
This is a brief summary of the meaning of “a disciple of Jesus” and applies to the time frame starting on the Day of Pentecost and there-after or until Jesus returns. One basic assumption is made: that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

### Disciple Definition -Who Is a Disciple of Jesus?

**Anyone who is a “called born again believer” is a talmid (disciple) of Jesus.**

We start as infant baby disciples at our conversion or as I heard Dallas Willard once say we are “bar-coded believers” and we are to develop through a maturing process to become adult disciples that can develop disciple-makers. From a Biblical perspective the development of adult disciples is the major function or work of the church – any church. Obedience to Christ’s command in Matthew 28:19-20 results in the Lord being glorified as Jesus said in John 15:8. The included figure depicts the approximate stages of growth. This diagram is taken from the [www.discipleship.org](http://www.discipleship.org) web site. It looks very simple, doesn’t it?

### The Discipleship Process



If it was a simple process then we would have been using it and the world would be different. Subsequent sessions on this site will define the **Best Management Practices (BMP)** from a Biblical perspective of how a church can develop such a process. The process can be used to evolve an existing church into and **Intentional Disciple Making (IDM)** church or it can be used to begin a new church without a lot of cultural baggage.

### Hebrew or Greek- Which is It?

Many, in defining “disciple” stop at the Greek words and culture associated with the Greek words which allows us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to define the word “disciple” any way our personal bias

leads us. We have to go beyond the Greek to the Hebrew words and the culture associated with the Hebrew words. Jesus was born into a Palestine Hebrew culture that was different from the Greek/Gentile pagan world of his time and our USA culture. Viewed from the Hebrew perspective allows for a more precise understanding of Jesus' definition "to be his disciple (talmid)" and, **most important**, his training methodology. The training phases he used with his disciples-apostles are essential for us in the 21st century. Thus, I start with a Hebrew perspective and not a Greek perspective.

**Hebrew Background** -The Hebrew word for disciple is **talmid**. The plural is **talmidim**. We translate talmidim as disciples. A talmid was an apprentice (learn and serve) of one of the rabbis at the time of Jesus. A talmid's job was to learn **everything** that his master/rabbi had to teach regarding the Torah, the "oral law" and the interpretation and life application of Torah and "oral law" and **to emulate** his rabbi's life. When fully trained he was to go make talmidim similar to his rabbi but for himself. The talmid was committed to his rabbi and his interpretation and life application of Torah and **came to the rabbi with a high degree of religious training in Torah and oral law obtained in his home and synagogue school**. Jesus trained his disciples using the same Hebrew methods.

Prior to Pentecost many who followed Jesus were called "talmidim/disciples" depicting the Jewish culture of Jesus' day but many turned away and no longer walked with him or followed him (John 6:66). **There is a tendency to mix the concept of a talmid before and after Pentecost which is confusing.** Today our USA churches contain many who "follow" Jesus but have never had a "born again/conversion" experience. Many in our USA churches are "called born again believers" but have never been intentionally train to develop as adult disciples that can reproduce talmidim for Jesus. A recent study that depicts the state of USA churches can be found at [https://discipleship-org.s3.amazonaws.com/text/ebooks/Final+2020+National+Study+Report.pdf?ck\\_subscriber\\_id=355724216](https://discipleship-org.s3.amazonaws.com/text/ebooks/Final+2020+National+Study+Report.pdf?ck_subscriber_id=355724216) – "National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches: High Aspirations Amidst Disappointing Results". A good read and I encourage you to read it.

#### **Application:**

- Each of us has to examine ourselves and ask the Holy Spirit to affirm our status as being an adopted child of God. (Matthew 4:17: Mark 1:14, John 3:15-16: John 1:12)
- We have to face the reality of our maturity level as a developing disciple of Christ. (Luke 9:23-24: John 15:8; 15:16)
- If you are a "called born-again believer" then ask yourself – (1) Who is helping me to develop as a disciple of Christ? (2) Who am I helping to develop as a disciple of Christ?

**Verse to memorize:** John 15:8 *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."* (ESV)

#### **Upcoming:**

- Jesus' Style of Authentic Discipleship
- Training Stages of Jesus' Apostles/Disciples

For comments, feedback or questions send email to: **ChurchBMP@gmail.com**