

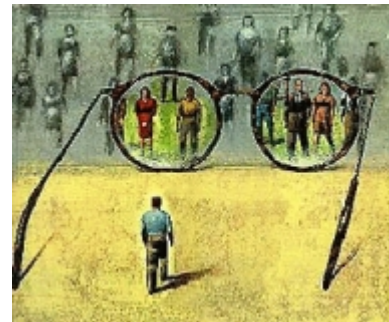
# A Disciple's Vision

Jesus' followers see the world through His eyes.

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One day, as Jesus was going about His usual business of traveling from town to town, He stopped and called something to the attention of His disciples. They were in the midst of a crowd, yet the disciples were apparently oblivious to the people around them, like we are when we're in a crowded mall.

Jesus, however, was seeing the people. He saw them as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." **"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."** ([Matthew 9:36](#)). He saw their frustration, anger, and sorrow. He saw that they were busy going nowhere in particular. I can imagine Him saying to His unseeing disciples: "Look at that woman over there. See her face? What do you suppose life is like for her? And that man. Do you see what he is doing? What does that tell you about him?"



Then Jesus made a statement that captures the essence of the basic problem in the world **"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"** ([Matthew 9:37](#)). People are destroying themselves and those around them in their lostness. But workers who can help such people are scarce. Jesus offered an equally succinct solution: **"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"** ([Matthew 9:38](#)).

The next thing we read about the twelve is that they are paired up and traveling through the villages of Galilee. They had become the workers Jesus had told them to ask God for. This tends to happen to people who pray for workers!

In this brief scenario, we see Jesus' heart for people. Because of His great compassion, He spent His days tirelessly working at two things: taking the good news to every town and preparing a handful of disciples who would do the same after He was gone.

## A DISCIPLE'S MISSION

Generations of disciples were at the heart of Jesus' plan. The only way such a plan can work is for each generation to disciple the next. That is why Jesus'

parting words were, **"Make disciples of all nations. Teach them to obey everything I taught you"** (see [Matthew 28:18–20](#)). It is not enough to preach the gospel to all nations. Those who believe must also be taught to obey all that Christ has taught.

The people whom the twelve evangelized and discipled were every bit as strategic to the progress of the gospel as the original disciples were. These new believers were the insiders to their communities, with natural connections with families, society, and the workplace. They were the locals. As such, they were positioned to take the gospel into the very crevices of their society—something the apostles could not do.

Each one of us is uniquely connected to a network of lost people who constitute our calling. We can be like the twelve were at first—blind to the people around us. Or we can become what the twelve became—workers sent by God to those who are lost. If the gospel is truly to penetrate a place, it will be through the people Jesus calls salt, light, and good seed—people for whom indifference has been replaced by love and concern.

This is the mission of the disciple. It's a bigger mission than we can handle adequately in this article. So we'll *focus here on identifying three essentials* that **must** characterize such people.

## **A DISCIPLE IS AVAILABLE TO CHRIST.**

Jesus said, **"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be"** ([John 12:26](#)). To follow Jesus is to be available to Him.

**This means taking the time to be in His presence.** Often that's the last thing we want to do. We may have an agenda of our own that we'd like to follow instead, or perhaps something is going on inside us that we are ashamed of. But in order to follow Christ as His disciples, we need to submit to God's Word and allow it to judge **"the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"** ([Hebrews 4:12](#)). Then we see our waywardness and recommit ourselves to God's plans and purposes. The goal, according to Jesus, is to be an attentive servant, ready to respond to His prompting. In Paul's words, it is keeping **"in step with the Spirit"** ([Galatians 5:25](#)).

How much time in private does this take? Enough time so that God's Word holds the predominant influence over our minds. I have read and studied the Scriptures for more than 20 years. The accumulated understanding I've gained certainly helps, but it is not the solution to my willfulness. Encounters with Christ need to be **fresh, frequent, and honest**.

It is in being where He is that we get our orientation for service. Where else will we gain the kind of compassion and love that Jesus felt for people? Where

would any sense of urgency come from if not from a deepening love for Christ and a deeper understanding of the gospel? Our mission must be driven from within. The words we use, and the boldness to speak them, must also come from Him. To gain the mind and heart of Christ, and to access the power He promised in the Great Commission, I must spend time with Him.

I find, however, that I can only go so far with this realigning of my mind and life alone in my closet. I also need the help of my sisters and brothers. The Apostle John writes, "**If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship [a living bond] with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin**" ([1 John 1:7](#)). There is something about stepping into the light with one's needs, in the safety of a loving community, that has no substitute. As a result of this kind of fellowship, the blood of Christ purifies from every sin! We need one another to be truly delivered from our sins. We need one another to stay motivated and focused, too. Disciples were never meant to be lone rangers.

## **A DISCIPLE LIVES AS A CITIZEN OF GOD'S KINGDOM.**

Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom: the eternal, unshakable rule of God over all that exists. Salvation is being "**rescued . . . from the dominion of darkness and brought . . . into the kingdom of the Son**" ([Col. 1:13](#)). It transforms us from prisoners into citizens, members of the royal household, and heirs!

We are citizens of a different place. We should live accordingly. The ways of the kingdom run counter to the ways of our society. The kingdom leaves nothing in our lives untouched. It instructs the way we think, go about our work, raise our children, use our time and money, and even relate to our enemies. Our citizenship is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week affair. It closes the gap between our spiritual lives and our material concerns. Every action, every attitude, should be a statement to the world that there is a better way to live.

Living as worthy citizens is essential to our mission. In Jesus, "**the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us**" ([John 1:14](#)). When people saw Him, they saw grace and truth in flesh and blood. They saw God!

People today need to see the gospel lived out if they are to truly comprehend it. It takes more than words. We are called to live in such a way that we "**make the teaching about God our Savior attractive**" ([Titus 2:10](#)).

Where we live is almost as important as how we live. Of what good are we to a lost world if we keep ourselves within the confines of the Christian community? We cannot hope to accomplish our mission if we are not loving the lost and living among them. They need to be able to see our light shining.

## A DISCIPLE GIVES HIS OR HER LIFE TO PEOPLE.

In one of His last conversations with His disciples, Jesus said, **"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds"** ([John 12:24](#)).

Jesus was talking about Himself. He was saying, **"If I don't go to the cross, if I do not die, there will be only this single seed."** But He did die—and here we are, millions of us across the centuries! We are the seeds from His surrendered life.

In the next verse, Jesus applied the same rule to us: **"The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life"** ([John 12:25](#)).

What does it mean to love one's life? What does that look like? It is getting up in the morning, going to work, coming home, going through the daily drill, playing some golf on the weekends, going to church, and taking a vacation now and then. It is living life and keeping one's discretionary time for one's self.

Jesus died for a lost world. He calls on us to do the same. That means drawing in the people who need Him most. But the cost for doing this is the death of our own self-centered lifestyles.

The following is great testimony from Jim Peterson, from The Navigators Ministry:

*"Ten years ago my wife, Marge, and I were faced with a choice. We had moved from Brazil to Colorado Springs to help lead the international work of The Navigators. All my colleagues would be Christians—and they were also very good friends! We knew the workload would be heavy and discretionary time scarce. So I went to my brothers and explained that Marge and I needed to find our friendships among people who didn't know Christ. I told them, 'I'll see you in heaven!'"*

*Over these 10 years we have watched in wonder as the power of the gospel has transformed one neighbor after another. The cost of that choice we made is a pittance compared to the joy we are experiencing with these people."*

## OPEN YOUR EYES.

The people of Jerusalem were judged because they ignored the day God visited them. **"When the city came into view, he wept over it. <sup>42</sup> 'If you had only recognized this day, and everything that was good for you! But now it's too late. <sup>43</sup> In the days ahead your enemies are going to bring up their heavy artillery and surround you, pressing in from every side. <sup>44</sup> They'll smash you and your babies on the pavement. Not one stone will be left intact. All this because you didn't recognize and welcome God's personal**

visit." ([Luke 19:41–44](#)). Our country was founded upon biblical religion. Today that foundation has all but vanished. In fact, the very idea of truth has eroded to the point where we no longer know the difference between good and evil.

We who are Christ's need to open our eyes and see what is happening.  
Jesus' analysis still stands. The harvest is plentiful, and the workers few. His solution also still stands.

Go stand on your porch. Pray for the people in the houses around you, even if you don't know their names. Ask God to send someone to them. Make this a habit. See what happens! It's your mission as a disciple.