

Introduction

The Discipleship Manual was originally created in 2007 as a part of an assignment at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary (now Free Lutheran Seminary) to create specific lessons relating to the basic teachings of the Christian life. That project became a resource that has been used by many to help Christians, especially those new to the Christian faith, grow in their knowledge and understanding of what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Since then, the demand for this manual has increased as there continues to be a need for clear, doctrinally sound teaching on discipleship from a conservative Lutheran perspective. Many people today have no Christian background at all, or even a positive view of Christian beliefs, yet there is a large portion of our population seeking spiritual truth. We have a great opportunity to present who Jesus is, what He has done for each person, and what it means to be His follower.

Our goal for this edition of *The Discipleship Manual* was to make updates that would be more accessible for people from all backgrounds and experiences, as they seek to learn about the biblical principles of life as a follower of Jesus. As a Lutheran teaching tool, *The Discipleship Manual* makes use of time-tested doctrines and writings that have, for centuries, helped believers clearly understand and apply these principles to real life. We hope that you find this updated version helpful in your spiritual growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

To God be the glory!



The Mission of AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship is to encourage, equip, and assist the congregations and pastors of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in making and equipping disciples who make and equip disciples.

Preface

This discipleship manual has been written to help believers (especially those new to the Christian faith, but also those who have been Christians for a longer time) grow in the grace and knowledge of truth as disciples of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus gave the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Disciples are made by baptizing and teaching. The basic meaning of the word “disciple” is “learner.” We invite you to learn from God’s Word what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The core of the life of a disciple is knowing you have been saved by God’s grace and are perfect before God because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, yet acknowledging that before man, you are not perfect. You will continue to struggle with sin, so God invites you to continually turn to Him and rely on His grace and forgiveness and renewal.

We pray that working through this ten-lesson journey will be a continuation of your life-long walk with Christ. We hope you will see in God’s Word His great love for you and the ways He will lead and guide you as you follow Him.

How can this manual be used? We hope it can be used in a variety of contexts and suggest that a pastor, lay leader, or someone who is mature in the Christian faith, will lead an individual or group through each lesson and, by the grace of God, model the Christian life of discipleship, as Paul exhorts in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

These lessons are not exhaustive but meant to be a basic foundation for the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Leaders should feel free to add from their own knowledge and experiences during discussion times. We estimate one hour to be a good time to plan for discipleship meetings, weekly, if possible, but each group should feel free to schedule meetings according to what works best for their context. Please note, the lessons vary in length.

Except for the first lesson, which should be done together at the first discipleship meeting, everyone should complete the lessons before the following meeting, using the prompts at the end of each lesson. We strongly encourage you to include a time of prayer during each meeting, giving everyone in your group the opportunity to share requests or updates and pray for each other.

At the end of each lesson is blank space with a “Notes” heading. This can be used for anything you might want to write down and remember—statements or Scripture passages from the lesson that were particularly impactful, questions you would like to ask, prayer requests, etc.

After the final lesson, we have included an appendix with some additional information that may be helpful in connection with the lessons. There is also a list of recommended resources that you can use for further study. We have noted which resources have similar topics to which lessons by assigning a number to each resource and listing the appropriate numbers at the end of each lesson.

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.”

—Colossians 2:6-7