

# STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

## HOW TO BE GROUNDED IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

### STUDY SEVEN

## Strengthening Your Grip on Discipleship

*Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 3:13–14; Luke 14:25–33*

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*I would consider it a success if Christians who have been onlookers, satisfied with a mediocre Christianity, got off the fence and became “Jesus people” in the full, true sense of that name. People whose consciences are pricked by wrong. People who hate anything that smacks of an inauthentic lifestyle. People who realize not only their treasure but their very lives are not their own.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**O**FF the bench, into the game!

Like spectators, bench players mostly watch the game and cheer for their teammates. They sit as reserves waiting for an opportunity to actively participate. They dream of the moment they can finally get in the game and score. When called off the bench, these players can't wait to show off their talents and skills, doing their very best for the team to win.

*Team Jesus has no bench players.* His church is not just a gathering of people who sit and listen to a preacher. He calls us all to actively participate and become totally committed, reaching out and changing people's lives, one person at a time. We can *all* touch *one* life for Jesus—whether the widow next door or the person who always runs into us at the grocery store.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll heed Christ's final command to His followers to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Being a disciple of Jesus and making disciples is what Christianity is all about. So, let's get off the bench and seize the opportunity to embrace our calling as a member of God's winning team!



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you turn to the Scriptures, remember God is with you. David acknowledged God's presence and willingness to help:

*Lead me by Your truth and teach me,  
for You are the God who saves me.  
All day long I put my hope in You. (Psalm 25:5)*

Like David, voice your longing for the Holy Spirit, the Great Coach, to lead you and teach you how to apply His truth.



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his book *Searching the Scriptures*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll provides four essential steps to his personal study of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> We'll use these guidelines: *observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application* to obtain biblical principles for a stronger grip on discipleship.

The context of our first passage, Matthew 28:16–20, is a pinnacle moment in history. Jesus was about to ascend from the earth when He spoke His last challenge to His disciples. Let's turn our attention to His final words, often referred to as the Great Commission.



### **Observation: The Mandate of Discipleship**

We'll begin with the step of *observation*, the process of reading carefully our passages and finding out what they actually say about discipleship.

#### **The Cornerstone of Discipleship—Matthew 28:16–20**

Read [Matthew 28:16–20](#). What was Jesus' central command to His disciples in 28:18–20? What does fulfilling this command entail?

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What is Jesus' promise to us as we carry out the Great Commission?

Let's rewind the story to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when He called a few men to follow Him, and look at what it meant for them to be disciples of Jesus.

## The Choosing of the Disciples—Mark 3:13–14

Read and observe [Mark 3:13–14](#). What was Jesus' *initial* objective when He enlisted these men?

*There was a summons, there was an appointment, and there was an association, which we will call "involvement" with Christ. And then there was service!*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

## The Cost of Discipleship—Luke 14:25–33

These disciples were among the privileged few who joined Jesus' inner circle, and yet responding to His call was not without cost. What did Jesus ask of His disciples in [Luke 14:25–33](#)? Note your observation for each verse listed below.

[Luke 14:26](#): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Luke 14:27](#): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Luke 14:33](#): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Jesus was talking about the issue of loyalty. Christ must be first. You're not a disciple if He isn't.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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## Interpretation: The Meaning of Discipleship

The Greek word for “disciple” is *mathetes*. Look up this term in your Bible-study resources or the Greek lexicon available for free at [billmounce.com](http://billmounce.com) and write its meaning below.

In *Luke 14:25–33*, Jesus taught that being His disciple, first, *impacts our relationships* (*Luke 14:25–26*). What does it mean to “by comparison, hate everyone else . . . even your own life” to be Jesus’ disciple?

*There is a loyalty factor connected with any personal relationship in the Christian’s life. And Christ says, “I am to come first.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Second, being a disciple *adjusts our goals*. Summarize the meaning of the phrase “carry your own cross” (*14:27*) and its significance to Jesus’ audience. For help with the answer, look up this verse in *Constable’s Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

*Your great goal in life is to honor Jesus Christ and to follow His will so that His direction becomes your directive. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Third, being a disciple *involves our possessions* (*Luke 14:28–33*). What was Jesus requiring when He said, “You cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own” (14:33)? For help, consult the online article, “Discipleship,” in *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary* at [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), particularly the section “Personal Commitment to Jesus.”

*What a way to live! Whatever I have is on loan from my Savior, and I do not bow down and worship before it! I worship Him! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Helping others follow Jesus like we’re following Jesus is essentially what it means to make disciples. Notice that “make disciples” is the only imperative verb in *Matthew 28:16–20*. The other verbs pick up that imperatival force—“Go,” “baptizing,” “teaching”—but the main command is to “make disciples.” Put in your own words how these commands fit together in Christ’s commission to all His followers.

Let’s look at the lives of the early Christian community to see committed disciples making disciples, fulfilling the Great Commission.



## **Correlation: The First Disciples**

Taking the step of *correlation* will help us find what the Bible says elsewhere about our topic or passages. The calling of the first disciples appears in all four gospels of the New Testament. *John 1:35–50* is Jesus’ initial call to His first followers.

Read *1:40–42* and *1:43–45*. What do you observe of Andrew and Philip?

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Compare *Matthew 4:18–22*; *Mark 1:16–20*; and *Luke 5:1–11*. How would you describe Andrew's and Philip's immediate and radical obedience?

Compare *John 14:15–21* to *Acts 2:1–4*. What did Jesus promise His disciples? When did He fulfill that promise?

Street meetings, public healings, bold preaching . . . the ministry of the early disciples revolutionized the world! How did people respond, according to *Acts 4:4–13*? Note the various reactions. What question did the religious authorities ask Peter and John? What amazed the members of the council about the disciples?

*Christ has left the earth. The thing that has marked the disciples' lives is that they are just like Christ. They didn't see the disciples as Peter and John and James and Matthew and Andrew; they saw them as Jesus' men. They were different. They had been discipled. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## **Application: Off the Bench! Into the Game!**

Jesus invites all His followers to get off the bench and join Him on the field of discipleship ministry. Let's see how to roll up our sleeves and get involved. What has the Holy Spirit put on your heart to do in response to this Bible study? Why not ask for the Spirit's guidance on how to proceed?

At its core, discipleship is relational. Jesus is first in our relationships, the focus of our life's ambition, and the treasure of our hearts. Take a moment to express your devotion to Jesus as His disciple. What would you like to tell Him?

Disciples are made through relationships. Do you need a mentor to help you learn more about Jesus and His words in Scripture? If so, whom can you ask to come alongside you?

Perhaps the Lord is leading you to mentor another believer in his or her walk with Christ. Whom can you join in following Jesus? How can you structure this discipleship relationship?

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Discussions about discipleship often revolve around forms: training curriculum, classes, and programs. At its heart, however, discipleship is being “with Jesus”—just like the original disciples were with Him—and inviting others to be with Him too. Let’s join Him in the greatest endeavor in history . . . making disciples of all the nations.



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your Son who came to earth to be the perfect sacrifice, so I can have a relationship with You. I thank You for the Holy Spirit, who empowers me to live boldly for You, as Jesus did. Help me to not sit on the bench when You have called me to play an active role in Your team. Lead my steps to those whose lives You want me to influence. Grant me humility to let other godly Christians touch my life. In Jesus’ glorious name. Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1981, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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