

# [Explain what a study of mark’s gospel can tell christians about the nature of dis...](https://assignbuster.com/explain-what-a-study-of-marks-gospel-can-tell-christians-about-the-nature-of-discipleship/)

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In Mark’s Gospel we learn about the aspects of discipleship. We learn that Jesus choose ordinary men to be his disciples, not just holy men. He choose tax collectors, fishermen and nationalists. A disciple is someone who follows a teacher. In the Gospel stories there are many disciples who become close to Jesus and are better known as the twelve apostles. These twelve apostles symbolise the twelve tribes of Israel.

A disciple of Jesus was expected to make many sacrifices. They had to totally commit themselves to following Jesus and they were expected to make an immediate response, for example, leave behind their family, security, friends and their old way of life. If one wasn’t prepared to do this, then they were unable to become a disciple of Jesus and this is related in the story of the rich young man. An examination of the nature of discipleship involves a study of the call of Jesus to his disciples and their response. In the story where ‘ Jesus Calls Four Fisherman’ (Mk1: 14-20), it teaches us how Jesus choose the first of the disciples.

He was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee when he saw two fishermen catching fish in a net; it was Simon and his brother Andrew. He said to come with him, “ Come with me and I will teach you how to catch people”. At once they left their nets and followed him. He continued to walk along the shore another bit and he saw two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This implies that Jesus did not intend to call a highly qualified band of men.

The fact that these four men were fishermen shows that Jesus was willing to call his disciples from all walks of life. These four men did not have any previous experience in teaching, preaching or spreading the gospel. Their experience lay elsewhere. It is important to understand that the response of the disciples to Jesus’ call is an example of how we must respond. All four disciples did not think twice about following Jesus, a total stranger. Their response was immediate.

This would suggest that they have to leave behind their whole way of life. We know from the story that James and John left behind their father and hired men. This would imply that James and John came from a wealthy background if they could employ workers. Jesus gives them their new mission, which is to be fishers of people or men. In other words their new task is to bring people to God. Another aspect of the nature of discipleship is to listen to and understand the word of God.

The best way to do this is to study the parable of the sower. It was important that the disciples listen to and understood the teachings of Jesus. In the parable of the sower (Mk4: 1-9) it explains how Jesus was once again teaching on the shore of Lake Galilee to a crowd so large that he got a boat and sat in it. He said how there was once a man who went to sow corn. As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it.

Some of it fell upon the rocky ground, where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted but the soil was not deep enough. The sun then came up, it burnt the young plants so they all withered and died. Some of the seeds fell among the thorn bushes, the bushes grew up and choked the plants, and they could not produce any corn. But some seeds fell on the good soil, and the plants sprouted, grew and produced corn: some had thirty grains, others sixty and others one hundred. The footpath represents the disciples who hear the word of God but do not listen.

They fall into the temptations of Satan. The rocky ground represents the disciples who receive the word of God but have no real roots. The first sign of trouble that comes along, they will disown their faith. The thorn bushes represent the disciples who let worldly goods, materialism and concerns to take over their lives. The good soil represents the disciples who hear and accept the message and live it out in their everyday life. The parable of the sower teaches us about the conditions necessary to enter the Kingdom of God.

It shows there are different types of disciples. The message of this story is that if you want to be true disciples of God we must allow the power of God to work on our lives. This teaches us that the nature of the early disciples was to listen to the teachings of Jesus and live it out in their lives like the soil that landed on the good soil and not like the seed that landed on the footpath, rocky ground or among the thorny bushes. This was essential if discipleship was to succeed and not fall away once temptation or difficulty came their way like the seed that landed on rocky ground and did not have any real roots. In studying the nature of discipleship it is important that we look at what the first disciples understand to be Jesus’ true identity and his mission. The first disciples on many occasions failed to realise exactly who Jesus was and the mission he had to fulfil.

In the story where ‘ Jesus speaks about his suffering and death’ (Mk8: 31-33) Jesus predicts his death and resurrection for the first time. In this passage Jesus is attempting to teach his disciples about his real mission. Jesus predicts the trial before the Sanhedrin Council, His death and resurrection. Peter however cannot accept that Jesus must suffer so he takes Jesus’ side and rebukes him. This portrayal of Peter shows that he fails to understand the real meaning of the mission of Jesus.

Peter can not accept that the Messiah must suffer and he refuses to believe this. This implies that Peter understands the Messiah as someone who is powerful and will overthrow the Romans. Mark shows Jesus getting angry with Peter; he is annoyed because Peter fails to understand who Jesus really is. Jesus rebukes Peter and accuses him of having thoughts not from God but from Satan. In another story the ‘ The request of James and John’ (Mk10: 35-45) James and John fail to realise Jesus for who he is.

James and John request the best seats in the Kingdom of Heaven. This request shows the ignorance of the disciples. They appear to believe that because of their position they have first choice. They do not realise that Jesus’ teachings are not about power and authority but that Jesus has come to serve and he expects his disciples to follow his example. In this passage we also learn that the son of man will give up his life in order that others will be saved. Here we see that the challenge for the first disciples was to understand Jesus and to recognise his role.

This challenge was all part of what we learn from Mark’s Gospel about the nature of discipleship. The nature of discipleship was to seek out the true meaning of Christ and his mission and to understand it fully. In studying the nature of discipleship it is important to look at the mission and commission that Jesus gave to his disciples. After Jesus was rejected at Nazareth he went to the villages round there, teaching the people. He called the twelve disciples together and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority over the evil spirits and ordered them, “ Do not take anything on your journey except a stick – no bread, no beggars bag, no money in your pockets.

Wear sandals, but don’t carry an extra shirt.” He also said “ Wherever you are welcomed, stay in the same house until you leave that place. If you come to a town where people do not welcome you or will not listen to you, leave it and shake the dust of your feet. That will be a warning to them!” So they went out and preached that people should turn away from their sins. They drove out many demons, and rubbed olive oil on many sick people and healed them. Last of all, Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating.

He scolded them, because they did not have faith and because they were too stubborn to believe those who had seen him alive. He said to them, “ Go throughout the whole world and preach the Gospel to the whole human race. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever doesn’t believe will be condemned. Believers will be given the power to perform miracles: they will drive out demons in my name; they will speak in strange tongues; if they pick up snakes or drink any poison, they will not be harmed; they will place their hands on sick people, who will get well.” This story tells us that the nature of discipleship was a universal call to all people who said yes. Discipleship meant having faith that God would protect you from all harm if you were willing to place your total trust in him.

The nature of discipleship also involves being prepared to suffer and make sacrifices. The nature of discipleship also included a challenge and this challenge involved self-sacrifice. One of the best examples portraying this in Mark’s Gospel is the story ‘ The Widows Offering.’ Whilst the rich men were putting in a lot of money in the temple treasury, the poor widow came along and dropped in two copper coins, worth about a penny.’ You may think that the rich men made the biggest sacrifice, but it really was the poor widow. Although she only put in a penny, it was everything that she had – she gave all she had to live on.

The rich men put in a lot of money, but it was only what they had to spare of their riches – it wasn’t everything they had. By giving all she had, this shows that she was willing to place all her trust in God. Jesus wanted his disciples to witness the poor widow giving all she had because he wanted to emphasise to them that if they wanted to be a disciple, they must have to be prepared to give up everything they had. They had to take up their cross and follow Jesus. This teaches us that the nature of discipleship included the willingness to make self sacrifice and endure suffering for the sake of the Gospel. ConclusionFrom a study of Mark’s Gospel we learn that for the first disciples and the disciples today, discipleship was, and is, like a journey.

In Mark’s Gospel the journey is shown to be a journey of great personal sacrifice and self-abandonment, even to the point of death. The nature of discipleship therefore describes a great journey of obedience, sacrifice, poverty, faith, commitment, love, forgiveness and perseverance. On completion it promises happiness with God in the Kingdom Of Heaven.