

The Disciple: How to Move Beyond Nominal Christianity

Matt. 28:16 Now the eleven **disciples** (μαθηταὶ) went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make **disciples** (μαθητεύσατε) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and **teaching** (διδάσκοντες) them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Education in the Ancient World

- Girls learned the trade of their mothers, sons the trade of their fathers
- No state education system, so only went to **private school** for as long as your parents could afford (*scholazō* - to have leisure or spare time)
- Socrates; Plato/Xenophon; Aristotle; Alexander
- Jesus calls four adults to follow him (Matt. 4:18-22) = free elite higher education for those who had missed the cut as children

1. How did learning occur?
2. What makes a good/bad teacher?
3. What makes a good/bad student?

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Teaching in the Ancient World

	Teacher	Student
Word	Speaks	Hears/ Memorises
Deed	Lives	Imitates

Jesus is a mighty prophet in *deed*
and word in Luke 24:19

The Teacher Speaks

Keep things brief (Sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount)

1 Thess. 5:16 Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

The Teacher Speaks

- Gather material according to a defining principle or common theme
- Constant repetition: Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19

What was Jesus doing with his disciples as they walked the dusty roads of Galilee and Judea?

The Student Memorises

The rabbis taught their pupils to recite from memory the oral Torah as well as the written Torah.

R. Simon b. Laqih repeated his Mishnah paragraph forty times before presenting himself before his teacher R. Yohanan (*b. Ta'an. 8a*).

R. Adda bar Ahahah would repeat his Mishnah teaching twenty-four times before coming to his Raba (*b. Ta'an 8a*)

Understanding and questioning follow memorisation and was only taught at higher levels of education.

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The Teacher Acts

- Philo (c. 30 B.C. – c. A.D. 45) proposed Moses as the perfect king, lawgiver, high priest and prophet, a perfect **model and type** (*typon*) for “all those who were inclined to **imitate** (*mimeomai*) him” (*Moses* 1:158-159).
- Josephus (37 – c. A.D. 100) portrays Moses as the perfect example of one who seeks to **imitate** (*mimeomai*) the ways of God (*Ant.* 1:19).

The Student Imitates

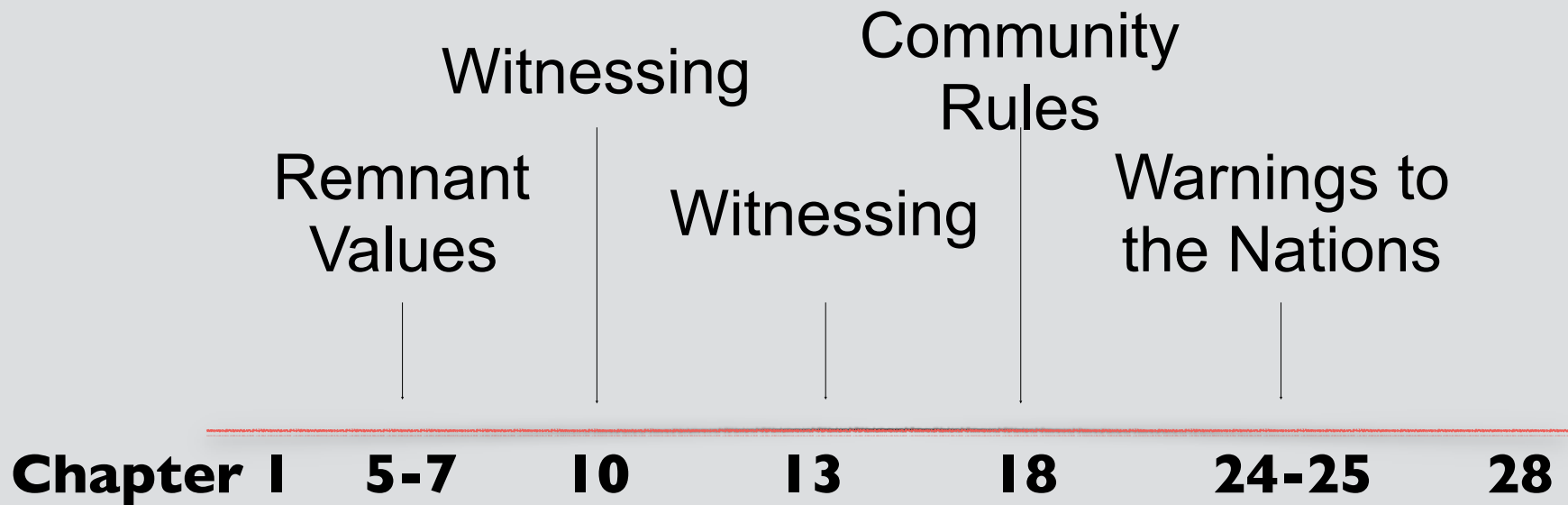
1Cor. 11:1 Be **imitators** of me, as I am of Christ.

1Th. 1:6 And you became **imitators** of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

1Th. 4:9 Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been **taught by God (θεοδίδακτοί)** to love one another;

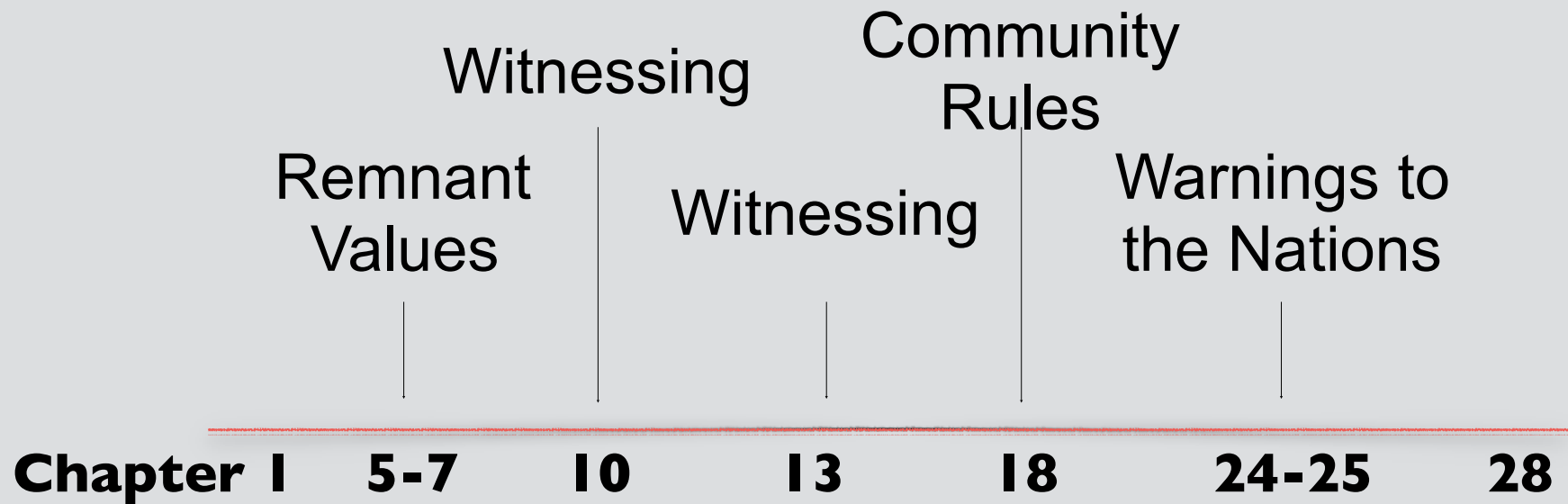
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- Jesus criticises the scribes and Pharisees for such a failure when he tells the crowds and his disciples to do whatever the scribes and Pharisees ‘teach you and follow it but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach’ (Matt 23:3).
- The scribes and Pharisees are imperfect exemplar figures who should at best be heard but not imitated.



1. Consistency

Word	Deed
<p>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town ... (Matt. 10:14)</p>	<p>Now when Jesus heard this (death of John), he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself (14:13)</p>
<p>Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles (10:18)</p>	<p>When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor (27:1-2)</p>
<p>Whoever loves father or mother than me is not worthy of me... (10:37)</p>	<p>And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.' (12:49-50)</p>



1. Consistency
2. Sharing one's life

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Herod (Matt. 14:1-12)

- Commits adultery (and lusts?) (14:4, 6; 5:27)
- Wants to commit murder (14:5; 5:22-23)
- Makes a promise on oath (14:7; 5:34)
- Persecutes a prophet (14:10; 5:10-12)

The Rich Young Man (19:16-22)

- Keeps the commandments (19:17ff; 5:20, 21, 27, 43)
- Needs to stop worrying about wealth (19:21; 6:24)
- Needs to store 'treasure in heaven' (19:21; 6:20)

Scribes and Pharisees (23:16-28)

- ‘You blind fools’ (23:17; 5:22)
- Swear by the sanctuary, etc. (23:16ff; 5:33-37)
- Keep every letter and stroke of the law but neglect its essence (23:23; 5:18-19; 7:12)
- Poor judgement (‘gnats and camels’ 23:24, ‘specks and logs’ 7:3)
- Practice piety before others in order to be seen by them (23:28; 6:1)
- ‘Hypocrites!’ (23:25, 27, 29; 6:2, 5, 16)

Matt. 7:24 “Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and **acts** on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶ And everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **does not act** on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

Matt. 25:14 “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave **five talents**, to another two, to another one, **to each according to his ability**. Then he went away. ¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

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Implications

1. Discipleship requires memorisation and intentional actions
2. Discipleship requires lives lived in close contact/role models
3. Discipleship guards against nominal Christianity
4. When his words dwell within us, our thought world changes (we are turned from bad trees to good trees)
5. When our thought world changes, our deeds change (as good trees we produce good fruit)