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Disciples to make more disciples.

Luke 06.39-49

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. 41 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. 43 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, 44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. 46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Luke writes,[[1]](#footnote-1) Jesus *“went out into the hills”*[[2]](#footnote-2) and had with him a “great **crowd** of *disciples* and a great **multitude** of *people* from Judea and Jerusalem etc. They were there to hear him teach, to be healed of their diseases … and many of the crowd sought to touch him, for *“power came from him and healed them all”.*[[3]](#footnote-3)

The majority of conservative biblical commentators write that a *“great multitude”* of people had gathered together the previous evening to be with Jesus[[4]](#footnote-4) but that Jesus had spent the entire night alone in prayer,[[5]](#footnote-5) and then, early the next morning, He called his many *“disciples”* to Him and chose twelve of them to be His **apostles**.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Luke[[7]](#footnote-7) who is a stickler for detail,[[8]](#footnote-8) writes that Jesus then walked for some distance along the slope of the mountain until He came to a level place:[[9]](#footnote-9) there he sat down with his *‘newly appointed apostles’* and that a great multitude of *‘disciples’* came to sit with Him there.

And so, there were three groups of people: the newly appointed *“twelve apostles”*; *“the great crowd of disciples”* – perhaps 70 or more and *“the great multitude of people”*. [[10]](#footnote-10). [[11]](#footnote-11)

Jesus then addresses this large gathering of people – collectively called *‘disciples’* [[12]](#footnote-12) to teach them about the good way of *making of disciples* of others for God.

It begins with Jesus asking a rhetorical question[[13]](#footnote-13) *“Can a blind man lead a blind man – will they not both fall into a pit?”*

The point being that a disciple is ***not*** above his teacher, but everyone who is ***fully taught*** will be like their teacher.

Next he asks them all *‘a tongue in cheek question’* [[14]](#footnote-14) … *"why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?”* [[15]](#footnote-15)

Having focused their attention, Jesus then uses more rhetoric,[[16]](#footnote-16) which was uncommon[[17]](#footnote-17) in those days, but He used **it** to train their thinking and understanding of the Godly moral disciplines to be taught rather than the formal religious rules and habits so familiar with Judaism.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Joachim Jeremias[[19]](#footnote-19) writes of the rejection of *“Israelites with slight blemish”* and the *‘rigorous attitude on questions of marriage’*, *‘the extra-ordinary pessimistic judgement of rabbinic Judaism’*, *‘that all heathen women were all suspected of having practised prostitution’*.

We do not know *‘if’* or how many people in this very large group of apostles and disciples were illiterate[[20]](#footnote-20) such as the **Am ha’aretz** or the *“people of the land”* and who may not understand the next, *“why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”*

Jesus teaches his disciples that their social position in life is irrelevant because they are to be God’s moral leaders of the people and Jesus uses illustrations from nature to teach the practical aspect of faith: *no good tree bears bad fruit*, nor again does *a bad tree bear good fruit*, furthermore Jesus says, figs are **not** gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes **picked** from a bramble bush.[[21]](#footnote-21)

And so, this *‘sermon on the mount’* teaches[[22]](#footnote-22) much of the essence of christianity: parables, beatitudes, prayers and of God himself by aliging them with Jesus.

It also teaches that to err is *human* but to persist in it is to be ***diabolical***[[23]](#footnote-23)and so Jesus addresses them with understanding, kindness and trust which is how God makes *‘disciples through others disciples’* with the love of God.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Fortunately, Luke[[25]](#footnote-25) who has written more of the NT than anyone else, writes that he had made a detailed study of christianity in order to write a ***reliable*** account of the teachings of Jesus[[26]](#footnote-26) as *“many”*[[27]](#footnote-27)others had done.

And so, His ministry went on and accordingly, the crowds who followed Jesus and His apostles and disciples were many[[28]](#footnote-28) as in the 4,000[[29]](#footnote-29) and the 5,000[[30]](#footnote-30) whom he fed with loaves and fishes and Jesus stating *“I have compassion on them … I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way …”.*[[31]](#footnote-31)

In the New Testament, there are some 20 references to *‘great multitudes’* [[32]](#footnote-32) that followed Jesus on foot from *town-to-town* (and/or) walked with Him on many and long journeys, including the *‘great number’* who walked with Him on His final journey from Jericho to Jerusalem to be crucified – approx 25kms.

Such was the keen interest of the crowds in Him, there were ocassions when the disciples wanted ***time away*** from them[[33]](#footnote-33) and so they asked Jesus to ***send them away*** to get their own food but He was *compassionate* and fed them by divine miracle.

All four gospel writers use **two** words to describe the size of the crowds that followed Jesus during His ministry, these are:

(1) the Greek ****which means a *‘great’ number* of people and the other Greek word is **** which means *‘numerous’* number of people: together they are used 38 times in the New Testament as the number of people who followed Jesus from *place to place*, town to town, location to location!

The main reasons for this:

1. Matthew writes with considerable insight … that Jesus had *“compassion for them* (because they were) *harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”* [[34]](#footnote-34)

2. Again, Matthew writes with insight that the crowds were astonished at the clarity of teaching from Jesus, for he taught them as one *who had authority* and not as their Scribes[[35]](#footnote-35) whose legal work was more important than the pastoral.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The role for the disciples of Jesus was clearly designated pastoral - “***to make disciples”*** with the love, compassion and truth in the message they knew and learnt from Jesus.

Mark writes, when Jesus *“was drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives*[[37]](#footnote-37)*, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty things that they had seen and heard … whilst they were following Jesus”.* [[38]](#footnote-38)

These were extra-ordinary days and events[[39]](#footnote-39) and when Christ was crucified,[[40]](#footnote-40) there came strange and unusual things: the **graves** gave up their dead, the Temple **curtain**[[41]](#footnote-41) was torn in two, **criminals** set free and all kinds of hearsay abounded and, when fire in Rome burnt for a week and destroyed half the city, Nero[[42]](#footnote-42) under suspicion looked for a scapegoat – *he* **blamed** the christians but despite their much and often severe suffering they spread the love and teaching of Jesus for all the days of their lives.

Suffering and death did not deter but them inspired them to spread the word and make more disciples: **Luke** acknowledging the testimony and witness of converted Jews, Romans, Greeks, Scribes[[43]](#footnote-43) and from the many who had been eyewitnesses among the estimated *‘more than 500 people’* who saw the risen Jesus at some time after his resurrection and before His ascension.[[44]](#footnote-44)

It is from that time the good news of Jesus was spread and impacted so much on the world over the past 2,000 years: collected by Luke who found the love of God shine through in the parables and sayings that shaped the marvellous story of Jesus.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Luke[[46]](#footnote-46) highlights the deep compassion of Jesus whose love and care for the poor, the healing the sick, the forgiveness of sinners and the resurrecting the dead and with his writing of his marvellous works of Luke-Acts: he helps the world over to know the story of Jesus.

Whereas **Matthew** traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham,[[47]](#footnote-47) father of the Jewish people, **Luke** traces the genealogy of Jesus back to the beginning of humanity in Adam the first man, created by God in His own image.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Jesus takes this to the ultimate: *“everyone who hears my words and does them, he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it”*, because it had been *‘well built.’* [[49]](#footnote-49)

The point being that everyone who comes to Jesus, hears His words and does them, *‘I will be with them as a solid-foundation for this life and for the everlasting life to come’*.

According to John, when the time drew near for Jesus to be arrested, Judas, procuring a band of soldiers[[50]](#footnote-50) and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees[[51]](#footnote-51), went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Jesus stepped forward and told them who he was and to let all the others go.[[52]](#footnote-52) And they did!

Early in His public ministry, in the Jerusalem Temple, in full public view, the Officials wanted to arrest him but the Temple Police reported back to the authories for failing to do so, *“no man ever spoke like this man!’*

And so, finally, they were able to silence Him without ever realising who He really was – Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, Son of God as appointed by God the Father.

1. . Leon Morris in his Tyndale commentary on Luke, IVP 1974 p13 writes, “Until recently very little attention seems to have been paid to the remarkable fact that Luke is the only one of the four evangelists to write a sequel to his gospel – The Acts of the Apostles. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . Luke, 6.12. None of the commentators mention the name or location of the ‘hills’ Jesus visited with the ‘great multitudes’ and prayed all night. Mount of Olives? [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Luke 6.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . Matthew 5.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . Luke 6.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . Luke 6.13-16 where the twelve apostles are named. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. . Leon Morris writes, “Tradition unanimously affirms this author to be Luke p14 … (he would not have had … to have two considerable volumes as these fathered on to him without reason p15. The internal evidence agrees. p16 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. . Unfortunately Luke’s time references are vague. Leon Morris p124. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. . Luke 6.17-19. “A great crowd of disciples … A great multitude of people.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. . Each of the four gospels includes the calling of Jesus’ first disciples; the [Synoptic Gospels](https://www.gotquestions.org/Synoptic-Gospels.html) (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) also provide lists of the Twelve, whereas John simply mentions them as a group ([Matthew 4:18–22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%204.18%E2%80%9322); [10:2–4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%2010.2%E2%80%934); [Mark 1:16–20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%201.16%E2%80%9320); [3:16–19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%203.16%E2%80%9319); [Luke 5:4–11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%205.4%E2%80%9311); [6:13–16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%206.13%E2%80%9316); [John 1:35–51](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.35%E2%80%9351)). The order in which the disciples were called and the order in which their names are given in the lists vary by account. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. . Dr W M Christie, a British scholar wrote in his book published in 1939, **Palestine Calling**, much the same as do the majority of expositors and commentators today that Jesus and His companions went up the gentle slope from Capernaum till the top of the ridge was reached. There the twelve were chosen, and the sermon was preached on the level a little way lower down. Matthew walked up with the crowd, and to him it was certainly a hill. Luke came over from Caesarea to view the scene he was to describe, and was impressed with the ‘level place’ on which he looked down from the Roman highway on the adjoining height. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. . Luke 6.20-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. . A rhetorical question is one for which the questioner does not expect a direct answer: in many cases it may be intended to start a discourse, or as a means of displaying or emphasize the speaker's or author's opinion on a topic. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. . Originated from a newspaper clipping from 1833, in which a tailor whose coat was stolen from a bowling alley advertises an offer to alter the coat to fit the thief. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. . Oscar Cullmann in his book The Christology of the New Testament, SCM London, 1959, p117, writes, “The question whether Jesus had a ‘messianic self-consciousness’ is one of the major problems for understanding both his life and teachings.” Perhaps this question by Jesus goes some distance to silencing any doubt. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 7. Rhetoric had it origins in Ancient Greece in the 5th century BC and because it was so important to the Greeks and Romans it was rarely used in speech except in Court proceeding of a serious crime before the magistrates. Roman stateman, Cicero 106-43BC was one of their famous orators. In their case, the debates did not involve all citizens, just the Roman Senate or the courts. Websters Dictionary defines it as “the art of science of using words effectively in speaking or writing and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. . According to the Macquarie Dictionary, 1981, p1481, rhetoric, the art of using language for persuasion but did not become a common practice until the 14th century AD in the Old French and Late Latin. See www,jstor.org.stable/295241. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. . Judaism is an Abrahamic, monotheistic, and ethnic religion comprising the collective religious, cultural, and legal tradition and civilization of the Jewish people. It has its roots as an organized religion in the Middle East during the Bronze Age. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. . Author of Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, which [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. . ‘The people of the land’, known as the Am ha’aretz were regarded as uneducated Jews, who were deemed likely to be negligent in their observance of the commandments due to their ignorance, and the term combines the meaning of “rustic”with those of “boorish, uncivilized, ignorant.” [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. . The proper name is Rubus which is a large and diverse genus of flowering plants in the rose family, Rosaceae, subfamily Rosoideae, with over 1,350 species. Raspberries, blackberries, and dewberries are common, widely distributed members of the genus. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. .Although Jesus was not an officially recognised teacher, he was popularly known as a teacher or rabbi and his associates were known as disciples. See John 1.35, 3.2, 7.14f, 9.28; Mark 2.18, 9.5, 11.21. According to Luke, the members of the early church were known as disciples as in Acts 6.1f. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. . Partly reworded from the Paul Tournier book, Guilt and Grace, Harper & Row, London 1962, Chapter I, The Extent of Guilt, VII True or False Guilt, p57. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. . Some examples are: Exodus 32.14, Numbers 23.19, 1 Samuel 15.29, 2 Samuel 6.16, 1 Kings 22.15-38, Jeremiah 26.19, Malachi 1.14, Matthew 28.19-20 and John 11.35. The central text being John 3.16 “not to condemn but to be saved”. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. . Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons (c.175-c.195) named Luke as the author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. A humble and disciplined writer. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. . Luke’s gospel is based on the testimony of those*‘who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word’* which maybe referring to the twelve disciples of Jesus, however, there are many references in the New Testament that “great multitudes” of people followed Jesus and there more than twenty such references. Matthew’s use of a particular Greek word for ‘many’ is used as “a great number” whereas Luke uses it as an antonym in the generous sense of *“the people of salvation”.* Williston Walker wrote in his crucial book, A History of the Christian Church, T & T Clark, Endinburgh, 1959, p30, “To this obscure period is due the composition of the Gospels. No subject in church history is more difficult …that at an early period … not now definitely to be fixed, a collection of the saying of Christ was in circulation … probably not far from the crucial years of AD75-80 …”. As Psalm 19.1 states, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth … but not just for himself (but) entrusted His glorious creation to the care of the human beings he had created in his own image and for his glory. We know that the whole of Creation declares the glory of God and that it is also very human to write about it. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. . The plural form ‘gospels’ from the Greek *euangelia* would not have been understood in the apostolic age and immediately following, for it is of the essence of the apostolic witness that there is only one true *euangelion*; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are at the forefront of the New Testament which, properly speaking, are four records of the one gospel of Jesus Christ … as stated, Mark was very important to Luke and Luke’s gospel has been remarkably vindicated for it’s accuracy. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. . The crowds that followed Jesus were many. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and especially Luke, the Acts of the apostles and in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 2.4, 2 Corinthians 8.22, 1 Thessalonians 3.13 and 1 Timothy 3.13 – crowds are mentioned. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. . Matthew 15.29-38, “I have compassion on the crowd …nothing to eat.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. . John 6.1-15 on “the other side of the Sea of Galilee”. cf 1 Corinthians 15.1-28 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. . Matthew 15.32 where Jesus states “I have compassion on the crowd …”. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. . The greek word used ‘mega’ means large or great. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. . Generally, Jesus welcomed the crowds and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. Matthew writes of one occasion which was late in the afternoon when the disciples came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." Matthew 14.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. . See Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34.11-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. . In the 1st century, scribes and Pharisees were two largely distinct groups, though some scribes were Pharisees. Scribes had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents (contracts for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, mortgages, the sale of land, and the like). They were forbidded to earn money working as a Scribe and therefore sought income by other means. See Matthew 9.36 and 7.29. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. . It was typical of Jerusalem that a large section of the population lived chiefly or entirely on charity or relief … first of all the scribes. It was forbidden that they should be paid for exercising their profession (of teaching). This no doubt affected their attitude … more than a hundred of the rabbis named in the Talmud were artisans and were called after their traded. There was more than 100 Temple scribes who were not paid for exercising their profession. Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. SCM, 1969, p112 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. . The Mount of Olives, so named for the olive groves that once dotted its slopes, is East Jerusalem's most prominent point, towering over 800 meters above sea level. This holy site is associated with Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and has been used as a place of prayer and burial since the days of the First Temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. . Mark 11.1-10, “many spread their garments on the road …”. See also Luke 19.36-40 “the whole multitude …”. Matthew 21.6-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. . The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 27, mentions that an earthquake coincided with the crucifixion: “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open.” [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. . The cross means suffering … central importance to the suffering of Christ. Leon Morris. The Cross in the New Testament. Paternoster Press Eerdmans 1965, p37 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. . The curtain or veil to the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube — its length, width and height were all equal to 15 feet, making it 60 feet long, 30 feet high and 4 inches thick. It was comprised of 72 squares that were sewn together. This veil formed a barrier between the Glory of God and man [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. . History has portrayed Roman Emperor Nero as one of the great villains — a cruel, insane despot, responsible for the Great Fire of Rome. Nero's name is synonymous with evil. He is said to have been a murderer of his own mother and wife, poisoner of his stepbrother, and persecutor of Christians. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. . In Mark’s view, Jesus’ main adversaries in [Galilee](https://www.britannica.com/place/Galilee-region-Israel) were scribes, but, according to Matthew, it was the Pharisees. These apparently conflicting views are readily reconciled: men knowledgeable about Jewish law and tradition would have scrutinized Jesus carefully, and it is likely that both scribes and Pharisees challenged his behaviour and teaching, as the Gospels indicate (e.g., Mark 2:6, 16; 3:22; Matthew 9:11; 12:2). According to one passage, the Pharisees (along with the Herodians) planned to destroy Jesus (Matthew 12:14; Mark 3:6). However,

    Christianity was deeply influenced by both Judaism and Roman cultural institutions. We can't fully understand the development of the Christian religion without putting it into these contexts! FF Bruce, New Testament History, writes it was ‘set in the context of the Roman Empire’.Oliphants London 1969 p1ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. . The story of the Ascension of Jesus is told in Acts 1.4-11. In Luke 24.51 the words ‘and was carried up into heaven’ are less well attested, as is also the description in Mark 16.16, however, it would be unreasonable to suppose that Luke would be grossly mistaken or inventive about such an important fact so long as any of the apostle were alive to note what he had written. See John 6.62, Acts 2.33-34; 3.21; Eph 4.8-10; I Thess 1.10, Heb 4.14; 9:24; 1 Peter 3.22 and Revelation 5.6. Objections have been raised about ‘heaven’ being a place above our heads. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. . Generally put, Mark was probably the earliest written in 66-70AD, Matthew written about 15 years after Mark – around 85AD. Luke about the same time – 85-90AD and John about 90-110AD. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. . Detail is important to Luke as he alone describes more than anyone how Jesus often went aside to pray: no other gospel gives such a comprehensive history of Jesus as God’s Son and Saviour of the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. . A descendant of Shem and son of Terah, who became the ancestor of the Hebrew and other nations – see Genesis 17.5. He lived a life of outstanding faith and waas known as the ‘friend of God’ – 2 Chronicles 20.7. His life history is recorded in Genesis 11.26 to 25.10 and summarized in Acts 7.2-8. A list of his immediaate descendants through his sons, Isaac and Ishmael is given in Genesis 25.11-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. . Greek bara ( ברא‎): "[he] created/creating". The word is in the masculine singular form, so that "he" is implied; a peculiarity of this verb is that it used only of God. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. . On the other hand, anyone who hears my words and ignores them, he is like a man building a house, who ignores the need for a solid foundation and heavy weather will be *‘the great ruin of that house.’* [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. . These were most likely a Roman Speira of 300-600 soldiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. . Matthew 26.47f writes that Jesus asked, “Have your come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me. Day after day I sat in the temple teaching and yoour did not seize me.” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. . John in 18.12 says “the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)