

# Island Group Discussion Guide

Abide • Connect • Share

Week of January 4, 2026

WHAT A DISCIPLE DOES • WEEK 1

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE? • HEBREWS 5:11-6:3; MATTHEW 15:24-25



## OPENING PRAYER TIME

Begin your meeting with 10-15 minutes of prayer using these prompts:

- Thank God for His presence with us as we begin this new year together
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our discussion and open our hearts to His truth
- Pray for willing hearts that desire to grow and mature in Christ
- Invite Jesus to reveal areas where we need transformation
- Ask for courage to pursue Him wholeheartedly in 2026
- Pray for our church to be a community of true disciples

## DISCUSSION

- **Ice breaker:** As we begin 2026, have you already started thinking about things you want to do differently this year? What's on your mind?
- **Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3.** What stands out to you about the problem described in this passage? Why do you think the writer says these believers had "become dull of hearing"?
- In the sermon, we heard that a common problem in the North American church is that people make a profession of faith, get excited initially, but then *"stop growing in their knowledge, their wisdom, their obedience, and toward holiness."* Why do you think this pattern is so common?
- Pastor Paul emphasized that these believers *"miss out on the fullness of complete joy that is found in Jesus Christ"* because they're *"never ready to experience the solid food of mature Christianity."* What's the difference between "milk" and "solid food" in the Christian life?
- **Read Matthew 16:24-25.** The sermon defined discipleship as *"an all-consuming pursuit of Jesus Christ."* How does Jesus describe what it means to follow Him in this passage?
- We heard that *"one of the saddest parts of pastoral ministry is watching Christians who have no motivation to mature."* They're *"running the race, but they have no joy."* What are some reasons Christians get stuck going nowhere in their faith?
- Pastor Paul explained that some people *"see discipleship merely as obeying"* — thinking of it as *"rules and regulations, do's and don'ts."* He called this *"a miserable way to live"* because *"discipleship for them is little more than a leash on their sin."* How is this different from true discipleship?



- The sermon made clear that "*discipleship is not fundamentally about rules — it's about Jesus.*" **Application question:** How would you describe your current approach to following Christ? Is it more about rules or about relationship?
- Pastor Paul used the illustration of running on a treadmill — if you turn your eyes to the side, you'll fall off. "*We've got to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus so that we don't fall off the treadmill.*" What tends to pull your eyes away from Jesus?
- **Read Matthew 11:28-30.** The message emphasized that "Jesus is a joy to follow" and that His "yoke is easy and His burden is light." How does this truth encourage you when discipleship feels hard?
- We heard that "*Jesus demands 100% commitment from His disciples — not 90, not 50, 100%.*" He also said to "*count the cost*" because "it's hard." How do you reconcile Jesus' demand for everything with His promise that His yoke is easy?
- Pastor Paul was honest: "*I feel like that all the time — that's why I need Jesus. That's why my dependence is on Christ.*" **Application question:** In what area of your life do you most need to depend on Christ's strength rather than your own?
- **Read Colossians 2:6-7.** The sermon explained that "*Jesus empowers us to give everything*" and that "*the grace that gives life to the dead also gives power to walk with Him.*" How does knowing this change your perspective on Jesus' demands?
- The message introduced the four elements of the discipleship shape: **Abide** (daily relationship with Jesus), **Connect** (committed relationships with God's family), **Invest** (giving your time, talent, and resources for the kingdom), and **Go** (intentionally sharing Jesus locally and globally). Which of these four feels most natural to you? Which feels most challenging?
- We heard that "each element fuels the next" — as you abide in Christ, you're drawn to connect; as you connect, you're compelled to invest; as you invest, you're led to go and share. **Application question:** Where do you see yourself in this cycle right now? What's your next step?
- Pastor Paul challenged us: "*If you just want to be enough of a Christian to keep God off your back, then you really don't understand what it means to be a Christian.*" **Application question:** What would it look like for you to move from "just enough" Christianity to wholehearted pursuit of Christ this year?
- The sermon opened with a challenge: "*The first thing I would encourage you to do above all things to make a priority of change is your prayer life.*" **Application question:** What specific step will you take this week to strengthen your prayer life as you begin 2026?

## CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Share prayer requests and concerns with the group. Be sure to write these down and send them to all group members so everyone can pray throughout the week, including those who were absent today.