



# Four T's of Discipleship

By

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Self-defense training follows a time-honored and proven system that includes four T's:

- Teach – Teach students self-defense techniques
- Train – Train students in applying self-defense techniques
- Test – Test students in using self-defense techniques
- Truth – Truth of the students' ability to use the techniques in actual self defense

Did you know that Christian discipleship follows that same pattern?

# Teach

Learning to be a disciple of Jesus Christ begins with someone teaching another person basic principles. Jesus chose His disciples, then taught them. Before Jesus left earth to return to Heaven, He told His disciples to “make disciples” (μαθητεύω – from μαθητής, learner) and “teach them” (διδάσκω – cause to learn).

A disciple of Jesus Christ must first understand that they are to be “learners.” That is the same thing a martial arts student needs to be – a “learner.” It does not take long for a martial arts instructor to discover which of his or her students want to learn. The same is true of a disciple-maker. It does not take long to discover who wants to learn.

A disciple is not just someone who attends a meeting at a building or someone who calls themselves by a particular name (e.g. Christian). A disciple is a “learner.” That is why Jesus told His disciples to “make disciples” – cause them to learn.

What do they learn? Whatever the Master says. That is the same in martial arts. Students do not tell their instructor what to teach them. The teacher causes them to learn what he or she wants them to know.

The same is true as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

*“... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:20*

The disciple-makers teach the disciple-learners to “observe” (τηρέω – guard, watch over, maintain, preserve) the things the Master commanded them. Anything the Master commanded the disciple-maker automatically becomes something the disciple-maker teaches the disciple-learner. When disciple-learners are fully trained and tested, they become disciple-makers and the cycle continues.

It's the same in martial arts. The master instructor teaches his or her students to the point that they can instruct others. What do those senior students teach the junior students? Whatever the master instructor taught the senior students. When junior students become senior students and are fully trained and tested, they become teachers and the cycle continues.

Notice the word “command” (ἐντέλλομαι – charge, enjoin, command). The Greek word carries the idea of “accomplishing” a goal – reaching the intended purpose. Jesus taught and commanded His disciples with an intended purpose. Reaching the intended purpose is a vital part of being a disciple-maker and disciple-learner. It is not enough just to “hear” something the Master said. A disciple must also be a “doer” of the command.

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:22-25*

Doing “some” of what one is taught does not a disciple make. Jesus raised the bar high and told His disciples to “observe all things” He had commanded them. Jesus taught His disciples hundreds of things to observe. His disciples made disciples and taught them the hundreds of things Jesus commanded them to observe. That includes those things the Spirit of Christ inspired the Lord’s disciples to teach and write (e.g. Romans, 1 Corinthians, 1 John).

The same is true in martial arts. The student must learn and observe to do “all” that he or she is taught by the instructor.

Becoming a “disciple” of Jesus Christ is not a *cafeteria* system of learning where you can pick and choose what you want to do. Jesus places everything He commands on your plate and tells you to learn and teach. Disciple-makers must learn to do all that Jesus commanded them to do.

# Train

One of the many things Jesus commanded His disciples was this –

*“And He spoke a parable to them: ‘Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.’” Luke 6:39-40*

The words “perfectly trained” (καταρτίζω – prepare, get ready, complete) speak to the *process* of disciple-making. Just as it takes years of hard training to earn a Black Belt in martial arts, it takes years of hard training to accomplish the goals Jesus has set for His followers to become “disciple-makers.”

If you are a student of Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts, you know what it is expected of you at every rank level. It's clearly spelled out for you in the [Black Belt Study Guide](#). You know what you need to learn and approximately how long it will take you to learn the material. You know that training will include many hours of hard work. Why work so hard? Some students want to learn how to defend themselves. Others want to become Black Belts. Either goal is good, but the majority of students through the years have told me that getting a Black Belt is important to them.

One of the unfortunate facts about martial arts is known as the 5-5-5 rule. 5% (or less) of students who begin training in martial arts become Black Belts. 5% (or less) of those who become Black Belts become 2nd Degree Black Belts. 5% (or less) of 2nd Degree Black Belts become 3rd Black Belts. And so on.

Unfortunately, the same is true in disciple-learning and disciple-making. The percentage of Christians who become disciple-learners (as defined in the New Testament) is low. The percentage of disciple-learners who become disciple-makers is even lower.

How many Christians do you know? Using New Testament criteria for discipleship, how many would you estimate are disciple-learners? Of disciple-learners you know, how many would you estimate have become disciple-makers? My guess is that your numbers are small.

Training in martial arts and as disciple-learners of Jesus Christ takes commitment and courage. Here are a few things Jesus told His disciples about that.

*“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’ Luke 9:23-24*

*“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” John 1:18-20*

Training to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is not only hard — it can be dangerous. That is one reason we see Jesus sending disciples out two-by-two. Another reason is that one of them may be a disciple-maker while the other is a disciple-learner. Training in Christian discipleship includes working with a partner to see how being a disciple of Christ works in realistic situations.

The same is true in martial arts. A student of martial arts can learn much from their partner. Moving your arms and legs into the air has some benefit, but moving your body in the same way with your partner teaches you how each movement connects to the goal of defending yourself in realistic situations.

Training as a disciple or as a student of martial arts must continue throughout the course of your life or you will lose some of your ability to use what you learned. You can train hard for months or even years, but you will lose much of what you knew and could do if you stop training. Do not stop. If you are a disciple-learner, become a disciple-maker. If you are a martial arts student, become an instructor. Making disciples and teaching means continuing your training and that will keep you sharp for God's purpose in your life.

# Test

Testing in martial arts is the process of seeing how a student responds to their training. How well do they know the martial techniques appropriate for their rank testing and how well do they work with their training partners? Remember the goal: to defend themselves against attack and become an efficient teaching Black Belt.

Testing in Christian disciple-making is the process seeing how a disciple-learner responds to observing all of Jesus Christ's commands. How well do they know the commands appropriate for their time as learners and how well do they work with their training partners? Remember the goal: to defend the Gospel well and become an efficient disciple-maker.

Jesus is the best example of how to “make disciples.” The apostles are also great examples, especially those who wrote letters that shared insights into training experiences (e.g. Paul, Peter, John). The Gospels, Book of Acts and several apostolic letters are great places to read to learn how to be both a disciple-maker and disciple-learner. Look for examples of the training process: Jesus with the 12, with the 70, with the 3; and Paul with Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Aristarchus, Epaphras, and others with whom he served.

Here are some examples from Paul’s writings about the importance and process of *testing* –

*“Test all things; hold fast what is good.” 1*

*Thessalonians 5:21*

*“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.” 2 Corinthians 13:5*

*“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.” 1 Thessalonians 2:4*

*“But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.” 1 Timothy 3:10*

*“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work*

*which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” 1 Corinthians 3:12-14*

The Apostle John also wrote about the importance of *testing* –

*“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” 1 John 2:3*

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1*

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.” Revelation 2:2*

*“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Revelation 2:10*

*“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” Revelation 3:10*

The Apostle Peter wrote about the importance of testing –

*“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having*

*not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:6-9*

James, the brother of the Lord, wrote this important statement about testing –

*“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4*

# Truth

The truth of whether your training as a disciple of Jesus Christ works is how following Christ works in real life. Our goal as followers of Jesus is to observe everything He has commanded us to do as we are teaching other followers of Jesus to do the same. Whatever your personality, talents and gifts, we all have the same truth.

Are we observing everything Jesus and the apostles taught that Christians are to do?

Are we making disciples? Are we teaching disciple-learners to observe whatever Christ commanded?

Truth is the the ultimate test of how well we are doing as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27*

If you would be interested in discipleship training in a Christian martial arts program near you, [please contact us](#).

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