We hear the word “discipleship” tossed around regularly, but do we understand what it means? This quarter’s studies will examine the meaning and cost of true discipleship for believers and their relationship with the Lord. Unit I is called “Prelude to Discipleship,” and it looks back to the period of Jesus’ appearance on this earth. Lesson 1 is the prophecy of His birth, followed by Mary’s expression of praise in lesson 2. In spite of her youth, she showed unusual spiritual maturity.

Two births follow in lessons 3 and 4—first of John the forerunner and then of Jesus. The two births are often referred to as the most significant births in all of history. Zacharias’s praise of the coming Messiah as well as the shepherds’ worship of the baby Jesus are described in these lessons.

Unit II is a study of Jesus’ initial teachings to His disciples about what discipleship is. Lesson 5 describes the necessity of total commitment through willingness to forsake everything in life, including vocations, to follow Him. Lesson 6 discusses turning sinners into disciples, beginning with Jesus’ call of Levi and revealing some of the changes in life that should follow. Lesson 7 tells us who Jesus decided to call as apostles from among the many disciples and also shows how He allowed them to walk with Him in ministry.

Jesus gives the parable of the soils in lesson 8 and interprets it to the Twelve. He points out that true discipleship is far more than mere verbal expressions of willingness. In lesson 9, the Twelve are sent on their first missions trip to reach out to others with their newly given authority and power.

Unit III delves further into the demands of discipleship. Lesson 10 shows Jesus revealing in greater clarity exactly who He is and how important it is to be totally committed to Him. Lesson 11 contains two lessons about discipleship, namely that we must respond to rejection with grace, not judgment, and that we must leave everything in this world behind for His service.

In lesson 12, Jesus again challenges His followers with the demands of discipleship as He tells us to “hate” our loved ones in comparison to our love for Him (Luke 14:26) and to count the cost before we make the commitment necessary for effective service. Finally, lesson 13 reveals deeper levels of commitment and faith. Servants must serve with diligence to accomplish the Master’s will.