

# Discipleship In a Leader

## DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

A leader requires training in the Word of God and experience in the application of the Word to life situations. God has established His methodology to accomplish this--He calls this process *discipleship*.

**General definition of discipleship:** one who is under the discipline of another for instruction to produce maturity.

A disciple is similar to a "*journeyman*" or "*apprentice*" but in spiritual terms, it is more than learning skills or a trade. It is learning a new *way of life*.

**Christian definition of discipleship:** one who is living in the way of the Lord, showing someone else how to live in the way of the Lord. (Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9,23)

Discipleship is not *information* but *life formation*. Passing information from one mind to another is education not discipleship. I Cor. 8:1 says that knowledge puffs up but love edifies. Love and relationship demand discipline. (Heb. 12:1-11; Prov. 13:24)

## THE NECESSITY OF DISCIPLESHIP

John 8:31-32 NASB

(31) So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

(32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Jesus said: believe—continue in word—be disciples—know truth—set free.

This is the normal process of our walk with God. Believing is the beginning point. It is then necessary that we *continue* in His word. The "*continuing*" causes us to be disciples. Disciples learn the truth and are set free.

It is possible to be a believer and not be a disciple. Many of our problems are a result of our failure to "continue in His word". As a consequence, we are not set free but remain in bondage of various types.

Bondage must be broken in our lives if we are to do the Father's will. We must be free in order to be obedient to all that the Lord requires of us. There can be no hindrances that prevent us from fulfilling the Lord's purpose for our lives. We have a picture of this in the raising of Lazarus from the grave.

**John 11:43-44 NASB**

(43) When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come forth.**"

(44) The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus \*said to them, "**Unbind him, and let him go.**"

This is a *physical* picture of a *spiritual* truth. We who are dead in sin are *individually* called into life by Jesus. However, we come forth from our tombs wrapped in grave clothes—the stinking trappings of our former life. These hinder our walk in our new life. The hands are bound and hinder us from doing the work of the Lord. The feet are bound and hinder us from going where the Lord calls us to go. The face is covered, hindering us from seeing and speaking clearly. Jesus commanded those with Him to loose Lazarus from his wrappings and bindings. He did not do it Himself! Jesus calls us into life but it is the fellow followers of Jesus that help us rid ourselves of the bindings of the former life.

Continuing is necessary because as we mature and move into leadership, we reach a place where we begin to participate in the great commission.

**Matthew 28:19-20 NASB**

(19) "**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

(20) **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"

The King James Version says "*teach all nations*", however, the Greek says "*disciple all nations*". The New American Standard and other translations translate this properly.

We are not called to make *converts*. We are called to make *disciples*. When you begin to make disciples you have become a leader. How can we disciple others if we have never been discipled ourselves? As you will see later in this study, even Jesus was discipled of the Father before He discipled others.

Notice, too, that discipling begins with water baptism and continues with teaching and observing the commands of the Lord.

## GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

**Romans 8:29 NASB**

(29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

**2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB**

(18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

We are to be conformed to the image of Christ. Jesus was the "Word made flesh" and His goal is to make the Word flesh in us. Jesus was conformed to the image of the Father. He said that if

you had seen Him, you had seen the Father. We are to be so conformed to the image of Jesus, that it could be said that if you have seen us then you have seen Jesus.

This process of conforming to the image of Jesus is the *first goal* of discipleship. This could be summed up in one word: **maturity**.

### John 17:20-23 NASB

(20) "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

(21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

(22) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

(23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Jesus prayed the Father that we all would be one. The goal then is unity. He went on to say "...that the world may know that You sent me...". Our unity is a testimony to the world of the Lordship of Jesus.

*Unity* is not *uniformity*. There is diversity within the body, yet we all are directed by the head. No one stands alone; but each stands with the other members of the body.

The *second goal* of discipleship is **unity**. The power of God comes with unity. When the disciples were all together in one accord in the one place in Acts 2:1,2, then the Holy Spirit came like a mighty rushing wind. Later in the chapter (v.14) Peter stands with the eleven (unity is evidenced by the leadership) and preaches his great sermon and about three thousand were added to them. Out of unity came **ministry**, which is the *third goal* of discipleship.

Jesus said in John 15:8 "...bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." What type of fruit are we to bear? God made everything that it should reproduce after its own kind (Gen. 1:24,25). You don't plant peas and harvest string beans. Then, the fruit of a disciple would be **more disciples**. This is the *final goal* of discipleship!

Discipleship produces **maturity**, which produces **unity**, which produces **ministry**, which produces **disciples**. This is the normal order of events as we learn to walk with the Lord. Many times our problem is the fact that we push ourselves or the Organized Church pushes us into various types of ministry before we have learned maturity and unity. The result is one of confusion, backbiting, paranoia, ineffectiveness and burnout.

## JESUS—OUR PATTERN

Jesus had three phases to His life. The first phase was from birth to about age 12. Jesus was like any other child during this phase.

**Luke 2:40 NASB**

(40) The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Phase two of Jesus' life began at age 12 when He and His parents went up to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

**Luke 2:41-52 NASB**

(41) Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

(42) And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast;

(43) and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,

(44) but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they *began* looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

(45) When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.

(46) Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

(47) And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

(48) When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."

(49) And He said to them, "**Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's *house*?**"

(50) But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

(51) And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart.

(52) And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Notice that "house" is italicized in verse 49, which means that the translators added it, supposedly to help the reader understand. The King James Version translates this as "about My Father's business". The literal rendering of the words is "the things of My Father". Even though it was not yet time for Jesus to enter into the fulfillment of the plans of the Father, He had a sense of His purpose as dictated by the will of the Father.

Jesus was "...about His Father's business" or "the things of His Father". Yet, He returned to Nazareth with His parents and was subject to them and he increased in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and men. From age twelve until about age thirty, we have no record of Jesus and his doings. Why? I believe that this was the period of discipleship for Jesus. He was discipled by the Father.

**Isaiah 50:4-7 NASB**

(4) The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the

weary one with a word. He awakens *Me* morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

(5) The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back.

(6) I gave My back to those who strike *Me*, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

(7) For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

The discipleship process is what teaches us how to speak the right word at the right time to those who need it. We learn this through a repetitive process, morning by morning. This opens our ears to hear what God requires of us.

Jesus entered phase three of His life at age thirty when He was baptized in the Jordan. This phase included his public ministry and the revelation of Who He was. This final phase also completed the Father's business. In John 17 verse 4 Jesus is praying to the Father and says "... having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." What work was finished? This was before the cross; before the "It is finished" statement when Jesus gave up the spirit. I believe that the work that was accomplished was the preparation of His disciples for ministry. Jesus had built leaders that would reproduce His ministry!

Although Jesus was God in the flesh, He did not live His life as God but as a man filled and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

#### Philippians 2:5-9 NASB

(5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

(6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

(7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

(8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

(9) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

He emptied himself and took upon Himself the form of a man and as such was tempted in all ways like us. He said we could be like Him. Not as God, but as man filled with the Holy Spirit and that we could do the works that He did, and even greater works (John 14:12).

As Jesus moved on with the Father's business after His baptism, His ministry was expressed in three ways:

- ◆ A public ministry to the multitudes (gift ministry),
- ◆ A teacher/disciple ministry to some,

- ◆ A shepherd/sheep ministry to the twelve.

As we mature in Christ, we become more like Him. Our ministry also becomes more like His ministry. The Lord gifts us in our calling, with the Holy Spirit dividing out the Gifts of the Spirit to us as He wills (1 Cor. 12:11).

As we then, full of the Spirit, go about the Lord's business, there will be many that we minister to in various ways. Out of those who receive ministry from us, there will be some who will want to learn from us. We become a teacher to them and they become disciples to us. As a teacher, we also become an example of the things that we teach. We take on the responsibility of leadership. Then, we can say with Paul "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*" (1 Cor. 11:1).

Out of His disciples, Jesus chose twelve for a special, deeper relationship. It was in this relationship that Jesus exemplified the role of a Shepherd.

#### Luke 6:13 NASB

(13) And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

Jesus had prayed all night before He chose His twelve (even then one was a traitor). We are told in another one of the Gospels why He chose the twelve.

#### Mark 3:14-15 NASB

(14) And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach,

(15) and to have authority to cast out the demons.

We should notice that the first reason was that they should "be with Him". As we learn to walk with the Lord, we need to remember that the "*being with*" comes before "*the ministry*".

The time spent with Jesus paid off. Later in Acts others knew that these men had "*been with*" Jesus. It was the mark of their ministry.

#### Acts 4:13 NASB

(13) Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

It was in "*being with*" Jesus that they learned to "*abide in the Vine*". The word for "**continuing**" in John 8:31 is the same Greek word (*meno*) that is translated as "**abide**" in John chapter 15.

#### John 15:1-7 NASB

- (1) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.
- (2) "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.
- (3) "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
- (4) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the

vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me.

(5) "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

(6) "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

(7) "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Abiding in body terms would be "*keeping our hand in the hand of Jesus*". That is the way that we walk with Him—as a little child, holding the hand that leads us. Also, like a little child, we sometimes pull our hand out of His because we want to go in a different direction.

The process of discipleship is **learning to keep our hand in His**. Its easy when it is to our personal advantage to do so. However, the test comes when it is not to our advantage to be identified with Jesus. We know that we have become mature when we keep our hand in His even when it is to our personal disadvantage to do so. This is an absolute requirement of anyone who would like to be a leader.