

DISCIPLESHIP

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Today I'd like to share some things I believe will radically change the way people approach ministering to others about their relationship with the Lord. Traditionally speaking, we have always emphasized the forgiveness of sins. The emphasis has been on getting people born again. Other things in the Christian life—the baptism in the Holy Spirit, healing, prosperity, joy, peace, intimacy—have been add-ons or optional. We preach and focus on the forgiveness of sins, and I don't believe that is how God intended it to be. The very word we use for salvation, "sozo," literally means not only forgiveness of sins but healing, deliverance, prosperity, and forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus died for us He did it as a package deal, not only for the forgiveness of sins. In a way, you can say forgiveness of sins is the most important part, because it's the front door, the beginning place without which you can't progress. I agree with that, but the Lord never intended us to break salvation up into parts, present only a portion of it, and try to get people to commit to that. Let's look at the very last instruction Jesus gave to His disciples before He ascended back into heaven. In Matthew 28:19-20, what we call the Great Commission, He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The New International Version says go and make disciples of all nations. This scripture doesn't say, "go and make converts." Don't go get people converted to Christianity. Don't get them to just accept a belief system or make a one-time commitment. Jesus said to go make disciples.

If you study the word "disciple," it means "a learner, a follower, a person who does more than make a one-time commitment." Again, don't misunderstand me; forgiveness of sins is essential to salvation. It's a non-negotiable part, but it is not the only part. I believe we should go to people where their need is. For example, if they are struggling and have a need in their marriage or their finances, if they are struggling in any area of life, we should present Jesus to them as the way to get their need met, as the One who loves them and wants to participate in their lives. When we minister to and teach them what the Lord has to say about how to prosper in their situation and how to see His power manifest, it will invariably point out that they need to make a commitment of their life to Him. For instance, if you're teaching on the subject of finances, how do you get a person to understand: "give and it will be given unto you"? This is completely contrary to the way the world thinks: "I've got to hoard, I've got to save, I've got to keep." Yet God says, "give." It's the opposite of human nature, and for a person to really tap into that system of belief, they would have to have an encounter with the Lord that changed their heart; the things of the Spirit are foolishness to the natural, physical man.

If the struggle is in their marriage, as you disciple them, talk about how God says to love your mate as Christ loved the church. It's a great opportunity to talk about how Christ came, bore our sins, and took our punishment. When you talk about how love is kind and all these things, the human nature can't do that. They have to have a divine encounter with God to change their hearts. I believe if we just started trying to teach people about how God loves them and wants them to prosper, start trying to disciple them and get them to where they can flow in the blessings of God in any area, regardless of how you do it, they would have to realize, "But I can't do that. This is beyond my ability." Then you would have them in a place where

you could say, “See, you need to be born again. You need to have God’s nature placed on the inside of you. You need to be forgiven yourself before you can turn around and forgive somebody else. How can you give God’s kind of love if you’ve never received it?” And on and on it goes.

I really believe, if we would focus on becoming a disciple of the Lord, being like Jesus, growing up in His nature, and walking like Him, it would drive every single person to make a personal commitment to Him, receive forgiveness of their sins, and be born again. But it wouldn’t leave them there. Salvation has traditionally been presented as the object or goal of the whole scheme, to get your sins forgiven so you won’t go to hell. Because of this, that has been what people’s faith has been out there for. That was their goal, their object. Once they reach that and gain assurance of their salvation, multitudes of people today lose the motivation to really go on with God. All they want is to maintain enough of a relationship with Him to be assured that they will go to be with Him. They don’t really have the motivation to seek God. Scripture says in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

If all that was presented to them was faith for forgiveness of sins, that’s what they have faith for. Once their faith obtains forgiveness, they are basically contented, just trying to hold on until it’s time to go be with the Lord. They don’t see Him as interested in every single aspect of their lives, but if we presented the Christian life as making an absolute commitment to the Lord, following Him, becoming mature, established people who are able to reproduce the life of Christ in every areas of their lives they would be brought to the point of salvation and born again. But they wouldn’t stop there. They would still have the goal of becoming disciples. It says in Matthew 28, you go teach them to observe ALL things, not teach them to just put faith in Christ but teach them how to prosper, how to have relationships, how to minister to other people. This is the commission the Lord gave people. He never commissioned His church to go preach only the forgiveness of sins. That was an important part, but it is not the whole message of the Gospel.

There is an interesting passage in John 6 where Jesus was teaching His disciples and saying some really strong things to them, basically claiming He was the Messiah: “I am the bread of life, I am the one you have to put your faith in.” John 8:30 says, “As he spake these words, many believed on him.” This is interesting. They believed on Him, they believed His message, they believed Jesus was the Christ. But in verses 31-32, Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him—the ones who believed His message—“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” He said “if you continue in My Word [that is if you continue to grow], then you can become My disciples.” He made a distinction between a person who believes on Him and a disciple.

A disciple is a person who does more than just believe Jesus is the Christ. It is someone who makes a commitment to Him that they will grow to the point of following Him in every area, and surrendering their lives to Him. I believe this is what the Lord wants. I’m not saying that a person who confesses Jesus as their Lord and doesn’t go on to maturity is not born again. I’m not saying they aren’t going to heaven, but I am saying that this is not what Jesus intended. He never intended for us only to acknowledge him as Messiah, receive salvation, have a secure eternity, and then struggle through this life. He never intended for His church to be people who are forgiven, but unable to live a victorious life and, therefore, have a sorry testimony to the world.

I’ve heard it expressed that if most people today who confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior were arrested for being Christians, there wouldn’t be enough evidence to convict them. That’s not the way God intended it. As you study the New Testament, those who were believers in Jesus were called Christians,

and that word “Christian” means “little Christ.” Originally this was a derogatory term for Christians that were acting just like Jesus did. They are little Christs. Most people today who claim the name of Christian would not be accused of being a little Christ. The word has taken on a different connotation to what it meant in New Testament days. We should be like they were, and the only way we can is to become disciples. The divine plan, the scheme God originally intended, was for Christians to become disciples. I believe when the church says, “No, a disciple is a super saint, elite, a special saint. What we have to do is preach forgiveness of sins and get people born again—that’s the important thing,” then the influence of Christianity has been lessened. So many people today claim the name of Christian, but they aren’t true disciples. Because of that, they have a negative testimony. Probably everyone reading this has said or heard something about the hypocrites at church. Mahatma Ghandi, the great Hindu leader, was convinced that Christianity was true after studying the Bible. He went to a Christian meeting in South Africa, intending to become a Christian, but because he had dark skin, they separated him. They were a white group and wouldn’t allow blacks to meet with them. Because he saw the actions of people who professed Christianity but were not disciples, he turned against it and led an entire nation away from Christianity. Today the nation of India suffers because of that. That negative influence came because we have emphasized salvation, the forgiveness of sins, but not discipleship.

That is not the message of the Gospel, not what God intended. He intends for us to be full-fledged mature disciples who are following Him and able to reproduce our faith. That is God’s plan for us. I pray this has encouraged you to recognize that He wants you to go beyond just receiving forgiveness of sins. We are going to begin to share how you can be a disciple and especially how you can raise up disciples.

DISCIPLESHIP (Outline)

“The Hebrew and Greek words for salvation imply the ideas of deliverance, safety, preservation, healing and soundness. Salvation is the great inclusive word of the Gospel, gathering into itself all the redemptive acts and processes.”

(The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1192)

Matthew 28:19-20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (KJV)

Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and MAKE DISCIPLES of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (NIV)

Greek: “MATHETES, lit., a learner, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor, in contrast to a teacher; hence is denotes ONE WHO FOLLOWS ONE’S TEACHING.”

(Vine)

Romans 10:17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

John 8:30-32: “As he spake these words, many believed on him. ³¹Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

DISCIPLESHIP (Teacher's Guide)

1. According to Acts 11:26, what were Christians originally called?

Disciples.

2. What does Matthew 28:20 say we should teach?

To observe all things that Jesus commanded.

3. Besides being taught, what are the things we should do? (See Luke 6:46, James 1:22 and 27)

We should not only take in information but actually do the things that Jesus commanded.

4. To be Jesus' disciples, we must do what, according to John 8:31?

Continue in God's Word.

DISCIPLESHIP (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

NOTE: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being discipled. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ In Matthew 28:19-20 are the words of Jesus, referred to as the Great Commission. He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The New International Version says, "Go and make disciples of all nations."

The scripture doesn't say to "go and make converts, go and get people converted to Christianity, get them to just accept a belief system or make a one-time commitment." Jesus said, "to make disciples."

² I believe that we need to put the focus on becoming a disciple of the Lord. Discipleship (being a follower, becoming like Jesus, growing up in His nature and walking like Him), should be our focus.

Matthew 28:20 states that we should teach others "to observe all things" that Jesus commanded—not just teach them to put faith in Christ. This is the commission that Jesus gave. He never commissioned His church to preach only the forgiveness of sins. Now that's important, but it is not the whole message of the Gospel.

³ A disciple is a person who does more than just believe that Jesus is the Christ. A disciple is a person who goes on and grows to the point that he follows Jesus in all areas of his life. Now, I am not saying that people who confess Jesus as their Lord, but don't mature, aren't born again or won't go to heaven. I am saying that this is not what God intended. He never intended for His church to be people who were forgiven, but unable to live victorious lives.

I've heard that if most people today who confess the Lord as their Savior were arrested for being a Christian, there wouldn't be enough evidence to convict them. You know, that's not the way God intended it.

¹ According to Acts 11:26, what were Christians originally called?

² What does Matthew 28:20 say we should teach?

³ Besides being taught, what are the things we should do? See Luke 6:46; James 1:22, 27

⁴In the New Testament, the people who were believers in the Lord were people who were called Christians. The word “Christian” means “little Christ.” This originally was a derogatory term applied to them, saying that these people acted just like Jesus did. They are “little Christs.” Most people today who claim the name of “Christian” would not be accused of being “little Christs.” The word “Christian” has taken on a connotation different from what it was in the New Testament days. We should be like those in the New Testament, and the only way we can become like that is to become disciples. This is the divine plan. God originally intended for Christians to become disciples.

⁴ To be Jesus’ disciples, we must do what according to John 8:31?

DISCIPLESHIP (Discipleship Questions)

Disciple: “Indicating thought [teachings] accompanied by endeavor [a strenuous effort or attempt]. One who follows ones teachings. Those who manifest that they are His “disciples” by abiding in His word. Those who believe upon Christ and confess it. A “disciple” is not only a pupil, but an adherent [a supporter or follower who sticks, adheres to, or supports his teacher]. Imitators of the teacher.” (W. E. Vine)

Read Acts 11:19-26

1. What did the disciples do after they were scattered after the persecution?
2. What did they preach?
3. What was the result of the hand of the Lord being with them?
4. What was the “purpose of heart” that Barnabas encouraged the people with?
5. How is Barnabas described in verse 24?
6. What did Barnabas and Saul [Paul] do for an entire year?
7. What were the first disciples called?

Read Matthew 28:18-20

8. Who has all authority in heaven and earth?
9. After clarifying to us that Jesus has all authority, what did He command us to do?
10. What are we to do when we “GO”?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
11. Based on the definition above and the commission to “make disciples,” can you see how discipling is more than merely making converts?
12. Baptism is a full submersion under water. Can you see that besides the literal meaning of baptism, it also means full submersion into ALL the things of God, the whole spectrum?
13. What are we to teach people?
14. What is the promise that the Lord leaves with us?

15. Does this mean that we are discipling on our own, by our own means and strength?

Read Joshua 1:9

16. What does God command us in this verse?

17. What assurance do we have that we don't have to be terrified, and that we can be strong and courageous?

18. If God says that He is with us wherever we go, does that mean only sometimes?

Read Mark 16:15-20

19. Where did Christ command the disciples to "GO" in this verse?

20. Who are we to preach the Gospel to?

21. What are you if you are baptized [fully submerged in Christ]?

22. If you choose not to believe, what are you?

23. What will follow those who believe?

24. Mark 16:17-18 says to "teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you." List the signs that Christ said would follow the Word.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

25. After the disciples received their instruction, what did they do in verse 20?

26. Who was with them?

27. How did Jesus "confirm the word"?

28. Who was obedient to the call?

29. And through their obedience, what did Jesus do?

30. Do you believe that if you are obedient to the call, Christ will also confirm His word through you by accompanying signs?

Read Romans 4:20-21

31. How did Abraham give glory to God, according to verse 20?
32. Regarding the promises of God he was
A. Fully convinced B. Partially convinced C. Doubtful
33. About what was he fully convinced?

Read Luke 6:46-49

34. What was the inconsistency Jesus questioned in verse 26?
35. What is the man like who hears His sayings and does them?
36. How far did the man dig to build his foundation?
37. What happened to his house when tribulation rose against it?
38. What is the man like who heard the Word and did nothing?
39. Whose house would you rather be in during a storm?
40. Have you been digging deep to lay your foundation in Christ?

Read James 1:21-22

41. What are you to lay aside?
42. What are you to receive with meekness?
43. What is this implanted Word able to do?
44. What is the implanted Word?
45. What are we if we only “hear” the Word?
46. What are we commanded to “do” with the Word?

Read John 14:12-14

47. If we believe in Jesus, what kind of works will we do?
48. Why will we do the “greater works”?
49. Why will Jesus do whatever we ask of Him in His name?

50. Christ reemphasizes a point in verse 14. What is it?
51. Is there any gray area about whether or not Christ will follow through on His promise?

Read John 14:21-23

52. How does Christ determine if we love Him?
53. He who loves Jesus will be loved of _____
54. Is God's love conditional?
55. How does Christ manifest Himself to us?

Read John 15:6-8

56. What must we do in order to receive those things that we ask for?
57. How is the Father glorified?
58. If we are bearing much fruit, what will we be?
59. Can you bear fruit if you are not abiding in His Word?
60. What happens to those who don't abide in Christ (verse 6)?

Read John 2:5

61. What did Jesus' mother say to the servants?
62. Is this a command or an option?
63. Do you think this command also applies to us?

Read Luke 9:35

64. What are we commanded to do in this verse?
65. Who is commanding us to "hear Him"?
66. Is this an optional request or a direct command?

Read Proverbs 8:32-36

67. What are we commanded to do in verse 32a?

68. What is the promise that follows?
69. What are we commanded to do in verse 33?
70. What are we if we listen and are watchful?
71. If we find God, what do we have?
72. Who do we wrong, or hurt, if we sin against God?
73. What do we love if we hate God?
74. For whose benefit is it if we listen, hear, receive, and do as the Lord commands?

Read John 8:11-12

75. What did Christ command the woman who was caught in the act of adultery?
76. Who is the light of the world?
77. What must we do in order to not walk in darkness?
78. If we follow Christ, what will we have?

Read John 8:31, 36

79. What does Christ call us if we “abide in His Word”?
80. If we are abiding in His Word, what shall we know?
81. What will knowing the truth do for us?
82. What happens if the “Son makes you free”?

Read Ephesians 5:1

83. Who are we to be imitators of?

Read 1 Peter 2:21

84. Whose steps should we follow in?

Philippians 3:17 (AMP)
“Brethren, together follow my example
and observe those who live
after the pattern we have set for you.”

DISCIPLESHIP (Discipleship Questions)

1. Preached the Word
2. Jesus Christ
3. A great number believed and turned to the Lord
4. Encouraged them to continue with the Lord
5. A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith
6. Assembled with the church and taught
7. Christians
8. Jesus
9. Go
10. A. Make disciples of all the nations
B. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
C. Teach them to observe ALL things Christ commanded
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. All things Christ commanded
14. He will be with us always
15. No
16. Be strong and courageous
17. The Lord is with us wherever we go
18. No
19. Into all the world
20. To every creature
21. Saved
22. Condemned
23. Signs
24. A. Cast out demons
B. Speak new tongues
C. Take up serpents
D. Lay hands on sick
25. They went out and did what was instructed
26. Jesus
27. Through accompanying signs
28. The disciples
29. Confirmed His Word
30. Yes
31. He did not waiver at the promise of God thru unbelief
32. A. Fully convinced
33. That what God promised, He was able to perform
34. They called Him Lord, but were disobedient to the calling
35. Like a man who built on a rock
36. Dug deep
37. It could not shake it

38. Like a man who built his house without a foundation
39. The first
40. Yes
41. Filthiness and wickedness
42. Implanted Word
43. Able to save your soul
44. The Word of God
45. Deceived
46. Be a doer
47. The same as Christ
48. Christ is with God
49. God may be glorified
50. If we ask anything in His name, He will do it
51. No
52. If we keep and do His commandments
53. God the Father
54. No
55. Through His word, and His indwelling presence
56. Abide in Christ
57. That you bear much fruit
58. His disciples
59. No
60. Cast out, thrown in the fire and burned
61. Whatever He says to you – DO IT!
62. Command
63. Yes
64. Hear Him
65. God
66. Direct command
67. Listen to God and keep His ways
68. We will be blessed
69. Hear instruction and be wise
70. Blessed
71. Life and favor
72. Ourselves
73. Death
74. Our own
75. Sin no more
76. Jesus
77. Follow Christ
78. The light of life
79. His disciples
80. The truth
81. Set us free
82. We are free indeed
83. God
84. Christ's

DISCIPLESHIP (Additional Information)

The Greek word for “disciple” is “MATHETES” and literally means, “a learner, or follower.” A disciple is not only a pupil but also a devoted follower and imitator of his teacher. Jesus said, “a student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40, NIV). A disciple is taught to observe (or do) all the things that Jesus commands (Matthew 28:19-20).

Being a disciple is not taking the easy life. The Scriptures state, “Let’s please the other fellow, not ourselves, and do what is for his good and thus build him up in the Lord.” Christ didn’t please Himself. As the psalmist said, “He came for the very purpose of suffering under the insults of those who were against the Lord” (Romans 15:2-3, The Living Bible).

Jesus said a disciple must love Him more than his closest relatives on earth and even more than his own life (Luke 14:26). One who wants to be a disciple must take up the cross daily and follow the path that Christ followed (Luke 9:23).

A disciple is one who believes Christ’s teaching, rests in His sacrifice, and imitates His example (Matthew 10:24, Luke 14:26, 27, 33, and John 6:68-69).