



The Lost Art of Making Disciples

A great discussion broke out in hell one day at the request of Lucifer, the ancient enemy of God and His Son, *“What can be done to stop the growth of this new menace on the earth? It is causing havoc in every realm that I control. The church must be stopped!”* A young, zealous demon spoke up, *“Let me release great persecutions against the church and that will stop her growth.”* The prince of demons retorted, *“Go, with my blessings.”*

Persecutions were launched and thousands of believers lost their homes, their loved ones, and often their lives, but it seemed that every drop of blood and every tear that was cried was but seed for new harvests of faith filled, loving followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The persecutions did not stop the spread of the church, but it seemed to fuel it.

Other ideas were discussed and many were attempted, but the church continued her great progress on through the years gaining momentum and strength until a wise old principality came forth. *“Let’s rob the church of her ability to reproduce. Let’s ease off on the persecution and other tricks we have unleashed and let’s stop her from rapidly reproducing by shifting her attention off the basic command and challenge of Jesus – making true disciples! If they stop truly discipling those who come in, we have won the battle.”* Lucifer erupted with cheer, gave the order, and the rest is history.

I don’t know if that scene really happened in hell, but I’m almost sure something like it did. Somewhere along the way, we have lost the mandate of the Lord Jesus, we have lost the basic command, the basic pattern and purpose of life – **making disciples**. We would rather preach sermons, lead church groups, and work on new programs, but are we making disciples?

DISCIPLESHIP. A great Bible word and a concept at the core of our faith in the Lord Jesus, but few of us know anything about it to any depth of degree. As Jesus was standing there, about to ascend into heaven, He gave His final command, His final mandate to His trusted followers: **“Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations”** Matt 28:19 I can just see in my minds eye the Lord standing there with His men, His disciples, and with a gleam in His eye saying, *“Men, what I have done in you, now go, do it in others. Become a reproducer of Kingdom life and greatness in others. These last three years, we have been together constantly and all that I am and have, I have given to you. Now, go and multiply! Disciple others.”* It seems that all of the power of the Kingdom of God entering a persons life falls into this one concept - making disciples.

Most of us probably couldn’t define what a disciple of the Jesus is biblically and have never had the privilege of having been in the wonderful process with Christ and more mature men and women to create deep devotion and maturity in Christ. Somehow, somewhere, we have lost our way a bit, but the Lord is restoring discipleship and the art of discipling to the Church today.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS ANYWAY?

The most literal translation of the word ‘disciple’ is to be a learner, but there are many deeper implications to this word. In the days of Jesus to be a disciple was to be one who studied closely the words and teachings of another in order to implement them in all aspects within life. It also meant to be deeply connected to the Teacher Himself, even above His teaching, to give allegiance and loyalty to the Teacher. Within this Teacher/disciple relationship, closeness, love, and loyalty to one-another were implied. Let’s define what a disciple of Jesus really is:

A disciple of Jesus is one who has entered a close relationship with Him and given their life absolutely to Him in total loyalty in order to learn Him, His words and His ways and follow Him entirely.

Listen to some of the statements Jesus made about being His disciple:

Luke 14:26-35 *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple . . ."So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.*

Mark 8:34-35 *"And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.*

Luke 9:57-62 *"And as they were going along the road, . . .61 And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

John 8:31 *Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine;*

John 15:8 *"By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.*

John 13:34-35 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Jesus' greatest anointing is the power to draw people to Himself and then touch their hearts with such love, grace, and power that they joyfully give all to follow Him. Are YOU a disciple of Jesus Christ? Are YOU following Him with all of your heart and soul?

The Biblical Pattern of Discipling

If our goal is to be real lovers and followers of Jesus, then what is the biblical pattern for making disciples? How did Jesus and His followers after Him do it? What was their pattern of entering a person's life and then truly discipling them?

And He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. 14 And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. Mark 3:13-15

Jesus, the master of making disciples, had a very unique style. He would find men who wanted to know God, allow them to work with Him and follow Him. Out of the group, He would identify those who were the most compatible for truly going the distance, for full surrender. Notice from this passage:

1. **Jesus had many following Him.** Jesus had many followers and many so-called disciples. From these disciples, He chose twelve men for a closer relationship and a deeper level of discipleship. Later in His ministry. He sends out the 12 (those closest disciples to Him) on their first ministry journey. A chapter later in the Bible, He sends out 70 more into the work of the Father. From this understanding, we must deduce that Jesus had disciples and then He had those who had a even closer relationship with Him – for our purpose, we will call them Sons!

When the discipleship process is begun within your life or ministry, you must clearly identify these two different groups of people – disciples and sons. Life & ministry is given to disciples on one level and to sons on a wholly different level. These sons, will be those trusted with your most precious spiritual possessions and your very self.

2. **Making Disciples:** What did Jesus do with this first group? What was His pattern with these followers and workers in His Kingdom?
- a. He taught them – Throughout the scriptures, we see Jesus constantly teaching this group many things about Himself, the Father, the Kingdom of God, and life and ministry in this Kingdom. To the multitudes, He taught only in parables, but to these closer disciples He would explain the parables more closely and clearly
 - b. He showed them how to minister – After teaching these disciples, Jesus constantly was demonstrating HOW to minister and release God’s power to help people. They saw Him heal the sick, deliver the demonized, preach the good news of the Kingdom, etc.
 - c. He sent them out to do the work themselves – after a period of training, Jesus later gave them power and authority and sent them out into the work. He trusted them to represent Him well and to do the work of His Father. He allowed them to take a risk.
 - d. He required a report of their work – After their first ministry journey, Jesus asked for a report of where they had been and what they had been doing. He listened to them, encouraged them, and corrected things that had not been done properly or misunderstandings in a loving and gentle manner.

He led them into a life process. From His example, we realize that most of discipling of others cannot be done in a classroom of merely teaching a few lessons. It is a total life activity focused on making genuine lovers and followers of God.

3. **Raising Up Sons:** Out of the host of followers (disciples) Jesus had, He chose twelve men to be His closest friends and spiritual sons. The Bible says in Mark 3 that He chose them and appointed them, “**that they may be with Him.**” What an interesting phrase. We know from the records of His life that many of these disciples followed Him and were trained by Him, but to these twelve men, they were to **be with Him.**

In all discipling, you will have some who go beyond being disciples (learners, followers, and doers) and will become sons (those who share your deepest affection and to whom you give your life.) These sons are the ones trusted to carry in them the seeds of greatness, the very power and life of God to change everything around them.

What did Jesus do differently with this group?

1. The Bible says that they were **with Him.** These men were invited into fellowship and life with Jesus at the deepest levels. They shared everything together. They laughed, cried and lived together. They shared bread, money and all of the work of the Kingdom.
2. Jesus deposited what He heard from the Father in these. They didn’t just get the teachings about the Kingdom that the others had, they saw the Father, and heard things that no-one else on earth had ever heard.
3. These received portions of His anointing and power far more than others. Somehow, Jesus imparted such rich depths of revelation and power in these men, that they literally turned their world upside down.
4. These men received His firmest correction. Jesus was so loving and kind, but He was always helping them see themselves clearly and correcting those areas that would harm them and the Kingdom some day.

How do I disciple in the practices of a local church?

True discipling must come down to our lives in the local church. We must give our lives to the life that Jesus led and see the same results that He saw. Here are a few suggestions to help get started:

- 1) Identify those God has placed in your life and begin to ask Him who to invest your life.
- 2) Create a small group and begin to meet with them regularly in your home or over coffee. Don't do it in the church building.
- 3) Meet for about 1 – 1 ½ hours:
 - a. Spend the first 20-30 minutes sharing what is going on in one-another's lives.
 - b. Teach them some principle of the Lord out of His word for 20-30 minutes. Discuss it and make it applicable to their lives.
 - c. Pray together for 20-30 minutes for each other's lives, for the ministry, for the city, etc.
- 4) Have lunch or breakfast with each of them several times per month getting down to a more personal level.
- 5) Take them with you whenever you minister and let them see and participate.
- 6) Give them ministry assignments, gradually growing them into His work.
- 7) Get reports back on how they did. Encourage them, correct them, and bless them in the work. Always encourage more than correct.
- 8) Speak faith into their hearts often. Inspire them to great steps of faith and always declare that you see God's greatness in them. Jesus saw a Simon (meaning reed that can be bent by the wind) and called him Peter (meaning a rock that is suitable with which to build.)
- 9) As they become sons, open your home, your family, and all of your life. Hold very little back. Be a friend and a spiritual parent to them.

Above all, begin! This is the life of a true follower of Jesus Christ. He has called us to make disciples. Through ministry we can bring addition into the Kingdom of God, but through making disciples we can become Kingdom multipliers. He has called us to be reproducers of His life and ministry upon the earth. Discipling is the vehicle that Jesus used and so must we!