

Discipleship Part 1: What Is A Disciple?

Tom Nelson

I. The Great Commission is also the great omission of the church. (Matthew 28:18-20)

II. The object of the church is not to make converts but disciples.

A. A disciple is a follower of Jesus, who begins to look like the one they follow.

1. This is the most ancient method of education.
2. The ancient Christians were called disciples over and over.
3. A disciple evaluates his life in light of the leader and adopts his life to the norms of the one being followed.

B. In Protestantism today we emphasize believing and trusting Christ.

1. But trusting Christ also involves a lifetime of devotion, mimicking Christ.
2. Francis Schaffer talked about upper and lower Christianity.
 - a. Upper stage Christianity talks of justification and reconciliation.
 - b. Lower stage Christianity impacts family relations and other practical issues of life.
 - c. Racism, for example, is in contradiction to real Christianity.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer also talked of authentic Christianity.
4. The question for today is not, "Are you a Christian but are you a disciple of Christ?"
 - a. Are you imitating Christ by taking up your cross and following him?
 - b. This is not a deep message but one that we all need to pay attention to.
 - c. Sports teams lose because they fail at the fundamentals.
 - d. Christians lose because they fail to follow Christ in the basic things.

III. The number one thing in the life of a disciple is humility.

A. A disciple is one who has decided he needs help to be taught how to follow God.

1. Let him who thinks he is wise in this world become ignorant that he might be wise.
2. The weak become strong by learning from Christ.

3. Self is an impediment to learning from Christ.

4. Mortimer Edmer, a great educator, said that education is backward, pouring effort into the wrong people.

a. We produce 18-20 year old people but the young cannot learn much because they are not humble.

b. Young people are under the delusion that youth means brilliance.

c. The young need to get battered in life before they can be humble enough to learn.

5. Martin Luther said that marriage was instituted to teach humility.

B. Once there is humiliation people can learn admiration.

1. Once we see our failures we can learn to admire truly significant people.

2. Jesus should be every Christian's hero.

a. We should love as Jesus loved.

b. Jesus is our example of courage.

c. Paul told timothy to remember Jesus when he faced Pontius Pilate.

d. Jesus is the great object of art and literature.

e. Every true hero in literature is a copy of Jesus.

f. Jesus is so great that mothers cannot name their children Jesus.

g. If Jesus walked into this room we would bow down.

h. Is Jesus your object and ideal of what we should be like?

C. We go from humiliation to admiration to education.

1. Christians often use their Bible just enough to keep evil away.

a. We need to read it every single day.

b. We need to understand the prophets, the Exodus, the Law, etc.

c. We need to linger in the word of God and learn it well.

d. We need to know the word so that when we get in a tight spot we remember our training.

D. The next point is application.

1. Discipleship is studying Jesus so we can do what Jesus did.
2. Paul said to discipline self for the purpose of godliness, buffeting the body so that I make it my slave.
3. The one who abides in Jesus ought to walk as Jesus walked.
4. We must bring every thought captive to the obedience to Christ.
5. When we apply the Bible to life we have an edge that can do great things in and through us.
6. There are men that are great, not famous, but great in the things of God.
7. Disciples of Jesus let the truth of God sink into their heads in order not to forget it.
8. Sometimes men of God grunt when they hear truth proclaimed.
9. The disciples on the road to Emmaus had their hearts burn as Christ proclaimed the truth to them.

E. The last part is called participation or adoption.

1. We take Jesus' purpose as our purpose.
2. He came to seek and to save the lost.
3. When you make it your purpose to help bring people into a saving knowledge of Christ you are a dangerous disciple.
4. Paul said he was being poured out as a drink offering in the sacrifice and service of the faith of his disciples.
5. If you can articulate your faith and lead someone else to faith and then emulate genuine faith for them you are becoming like Christ.
6. If you cannot do this you have a problem, for this is God's intention for you.
 - a. You may be in error and have no life in you.
 - b. You may have been discredited by poor behavior.
 - c. You may be distracted by other things.
 - d. You may be discouraged and afraid to engage people.
7. If you are not a disciple and not making disciples you can change.
 - a. A man came to the church to learn how to become a disciple and began to impact others' lives.

b. Many people come to church to learn more about Christ and to pass that knowledge on to others.

c. This makes life exciting; it's the purpose for which God created us.

8. Christians need to learn the basics of the faith in small groups.

a. We all begin at the beginning.

b. We all progress through the levels in order to bring you to maturity.

c. We also need to divide the groups into study groups and action groups.
(Colossians 2:7)

d. If you progress well we give you your own group so you can begin impacting other people.

e. Some object to small group involvement because they don't want to be found out.

1. This person we cannot help.

2. We can marry you and bury you but we cannot help you grow.

3. Those who want authentic Christianity can grow in these small groups and mature, becoming a genuine disciple.

4. You all have a genuine chance to participate in the body of Christ.