

THE ELEMENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

by

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The Christian Church today needs to define more specifically the meaning of discipleship. Often, a person who trusts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour does not experience spiritual growth and commitment. It is the purpose of this thesis to determine the meaning and methods of discipleship as taught by Jesus Christ.

Discipleship occurs between a teacher and a learner. The learner willingly submits to the authority of the teacher in order to receive instruction. The Greek word for a disciple or learner is *μαθητης*.

Secular Greek literature and rabbinical schools emphasized more the learning of factual knowledge and a skill, rather than the personal relationship between the teacher and the disciple. There were no teacher-disciple relationships between the Old Testament priests and prophets because God taught the people directly through His Word.

Jesus Christ, unlike other teachers, personally called His disciples. Jesus Christ spent much time with His disciples. The disciples of Jesus observed Jesus' character and heard His teachings. The disciples, after hearing and observing Jesus, began to teach other people. Jesus Christ commanded total commitment to His teachings and His claims to being God.

The motives of the people toward following Jesus became the basis for differences of commitment to Jesus Christ. There are four types of commitment among Christ's disciples. They range from the most intimate believers to the curious unbelievers.

All believers are not disciples of Jesus Christ. No man can totally obey the requirements of discipleship that Jesus commands. Jesus Christ addressed these requirements to people who were already believers. The fact that some believers will be ashamed at Christ's return and others will not be ashamed means that all believers are not disciples.

Man's sinfulness prevents any man from becoming a disciple in Christ's ultimate sense. Christ requires a disciple to deny himself, live a shameless life for Christ, submit to his teacher, love others, be loyal to Christ's words, and love Christ above his family. Also, the disciple must surrender his priorities and plans to Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, the term, "Christian discipleship," has been receiving great attention in the Christian community. Discipleship is an area of the Christian life which for many years has suffered from neglect. Why does there seem to be so much talk about it today?

The writer of this thesis sees a current problem within the Christian Church. Other people have seen this problem within the Church, and this is one of the reasons for the current wide interest in the subject of Christian discipleship. The writer notices that while many people are hearing the Gospel today and receiving Jesus Christ as their Saviour, nevertheless, many of these same new believers are not growing daily in their Christian characters and life-styles. They lack total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who died to save them.

Within this realm of commitment, lies the area of discipleship. One needs to know what discipleship is, whether all believers qualify for the term "disciple," and how great a price one has to pay to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, or "counting the cost," before he discusses the methods of achieving these ends. This thesis seeks to answer these preceding questions on the nature of discipleship, and proposes

some practical means of nurturing discipleship in the
Christian life.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

The Definition Of A Disciple

Although the emphasis of this thesis is upon the elements of discipleship, it is first necessary, as a prerequisite toward understanding discipleship, to determine what a disciple is as demonstrated both within and outside the pages of the Scriptures.

A disciple is basically a learner. He is a person who willingly submits himself to the instruction, life, and actions of an authority on a particular subject. The implication is the person who is giving the instruction knows more about the subject at hand than the person receiving the instruction. Also, the person receiving the instruction, or the pupil, is willing to learn the content or actions from the authority on the subject. These conditions are necessary before true learning takes place, or the pupil is teachable.

The Greek word translated "disciple" in English is *μαθητής* and comes from the Greek verb *μανθάνω* meaning "to learn." The noun form, *μαθητής*, therefore describes a learner.

There are two areas in literature outside of the Bible where the word, *μαθητής*, is used.

The first area of literature outside of the Bible is secular Greek literature. Here, the word, μαθητής, describes the relationship between a teacher and a student in regards to learning a set of facts in some subject such as philosophy, or in learning some facts about a trade. The word also describes not only the intellectual imparting and receiving of factual knowledge, but also some skill involved in using the acquired knowledge. The student recorded this information he acquired and related it to others who would be under his authority.

Not only would knowledge and skill be acquired in the time the teacher and student were together, but also, a personal relationship would develop on a formal and informal basis between the two. However, in the Greek literature outside of the Bible, the emphasis is on the imparting of information from one person to another or of imparting some skill from one person to another. The dependence of the student on the teacher for acquiring new knowledge and skills, then in turn, teaching these skills and knowledge to others by the student is expressed in the following:

Rengstorff's analysis of the non-Biblical use of μαθητής indicates two things of importance to this study. First, the term has an almost technical meaning of one who is dependent upon a διδασκαλος for certain information otherwise unobtainable. Further, the nature of this "information exchange" requires that the disciple collect, preserve and transmit the "wise sayings" of the διδασκαλος. The existence of this "tradition"

seems to have always been part of the relationship implied by μαθητής.¹

In the Old Testament, there was no special class of persons designed to instruct a select group of students in the Word of God.

Neither the prophets nor the priests were given the right to expound the truths of the Word of God to a select group of willing advocates. Instead, the prophets and priests were only spokesmen for God who only delivered the contents of the Word of God as it was revealed to them. The fact that the Old Testament books were revealed and divinely the product of the very breath of God meant that they had an authoritative character all of their own and God was the ultimate Teacher as His Word was read to and by the people. Therefore, in order to eliminate the possibility of man's word superseding God's Word, the teacher-disciple relationship did not exist. This is stated in the following:

Although the formal relation of teacher and pupil does exist in the Old Testament, there is no master-disciple relation such as that which existed in the Greek culture It was God Himself who was the teacher of His law. Thus the prophets and priests spoke for God, but they themselves were never in an independent role. Because of this there was no place for a master-disciple relationship between men. For this reason not even the prophets or priests had disciples. Men did not teach on

¹William Elliott, "Christian Discipleship" (Unpublished Theology Seminar Paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 4-5.

their own authority but on the authority of God, and there was no possibility of establishing human word alongside the revealed Word of God.¹

Teacher-disciple relationships did exist in other sectors of life. However, the point is that there were no teacher-disciple relationships in regards to the religion of Israel in the Old Testament era.

The next phase of the history of the teacher-disciple relationship came during the period of Israel's history after the Babylonian Captivity when the Jews returned to the land of Palestine. A group of men, called Rabbis, developed and studied the Law of God or Torah. These men made it their life's goal to be skilled in interpreting the Law of God to the people. These men took under their direction and supervision certain men who sought them out especially in order to learn the Law of God, and to become rabbis themselves so that they in turn could teach other men. The purpose of the instruction was mainly to transmit the knowledge of the Law of God to the disciple under the rabbi's care. However, a personal relationship between the rabbi and the student developed to the extent of also learning the skills of teaching. This is expressed in the following quotation:

¹J. Timothy Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of μαθητής in the New Testament" (Unpublished M. Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 16-17.

Thus the role of the rabbi was very different from what was to be found in the Old Testament. The rabbi had become a teacher in his own right rather than just a spokesman for God. The rabbi interpreted the law now on his own authority, based on his own study and understanding of the Scriptures. The ideal goal was that every man would occupy himself with studying the Torah so that he would always be able to do what is right in any given situation. However, since this was literally impossible, the role of the rabbi became very important in Judaism.¹

In both the rabbinical schools and the Grecian schools, the basic goal of the disciple of a teacher was to impart some skill or knowledge, with little emphasis on the personal relationship between the teacher and the disciple. This aspect of the teacher-disciple relationship is expressed by the following quotation:

The disciple depended upon his teacher for information that could not otherwise be obtained, and usually maintained this dependence throughout his career.²

In his thesis on the meaning of the word μαθητής, Timothy Coyle concludes that the derivation of the word, "disciple," definitely has within the meaning of all its roots the characteristic of learning. He concludes this thought in the following:

From the above study it can be seen that all of the cognates of μαθητής consistently have to do with learning,

¹Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of μαθητής in the New Testament," pp. 20-21.

²Elliott, "Christian Discipleship," p. 3.

and those that contain $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ itself (or a form of it) specifically carry the meaning of a disciple in one way or another.¹

The Relationship Between Jesus and His Disciples

The New Testament contains several instances of teacher-disciple relationships. The Pharisees, John the Baptist, and Moses all had disciples who followed their teachings. The most important and interesting of the teacher-disciple relationships was the relationship which Jesus Christ had with His disciples. Later, the writer will examine the degrees of commitment each of the types of Jesus' disciples had with their Master. For the present, though, it is necessary to ask in what ways did Jesus communicate, and what were the subjects learned by the disciples of Jesus? Jesus communicated in the relationships discussed below primarily with His twelve disciples whom Jesus chose from the ranks of those who believed on Him as Lord and Saviour.

The first characteristic of the relationship between Jesus and His disciples is the fact that Jesus called His disciples. The students of the rabbis in the rabbinical schools always sought out the particular rabbi under which they wanted to receive instruction. However, Jesus Christ,

¹Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ in the New Testament," p. 11.

the Divine Master, did the choosing as to whom He wanted to teach and be with Him. Such was necessary from a Biblical and theological point of view because the sinful nature of mankind makes it impossible for men to recognize Jesus Christ as God, and desire to learn from Him. This initiative of Jesus Christ in choosing disciples is portrayed in the following:

But in this point, in the genesis of the circle of disciples, there is a striking difference. In rabbinical circles the initiative in discipleship lay with the disciple. "Take to yourself a teacher" is the advice given to the aspiring disciple by a Jewish teacher of pre-Christian times. We have no record of a call issued by a Jewish rabbi to a disciple in all rabbinic literature, a literature which otherwise offers many instructive parallels to the association between Jesus and the men who followed Him. What in Judaism was the pious duty¹ of the disciple is here the sovereign act of the master.

Another characteristic of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His disciples, especially the Twelve, lay in the fact that Jesus and His disciples spent much time together. In order for the full impact of the teachings of Jesus Christ to be made on the lives of the disciples, the disciples and Jesus needed to spend many days, and as much as three full years, together. Even then, the twelve disciples were slow to gather the meaning of the teaching of Christ as Luke states in Luke 24:25.

¹Martin H. Franzmann, "Studies in Discipleship" (Concordia Theological Monthly; XXXI:10, October, 1960), p. 607.

It was not only the content of His teachings which Jesus wished the disciples to imbibe, but also the style and quality of life which Jesus lived. Jesus sought by His perfect example to have the disciples imitate Him in their own lives. These two concepts, that of living with Jesus and trying to have Jesus' teachings and life style be a part of the disciples' own lives is expressed in the following:

The purpose in selecting the twelve is clearly seen in Mark's account (Mk. 3:14-15). First Jesus chose them so that they might be with Him. They had to be His witnesses. The only way that He could fully teach and train them was for them to be continually with Him. The ultimate goal was for the disciples to become like the Teacher (Mt. 10:25), and in order for this to happen they had to see Him as He was, as well as have the time to learn all He needed to teach them. Thus the twelve were taught many things that were not told to others (e.g. Mt. 13:36-39).¹

But wherever disciples are referred to, the term always implies the existence of a strong personal commitment on the part of the disciple to the master.²

Central to the concept is a strong personal attachment of the disciple to the teacher, one so strong that it shapes the whole life of the disciple. Such an effect to come about in the life of the disciple necessitated that he live in close community with his teacher.³

The fact that Jesus wanted the twelve disciples to become indoctrinated with His message and manner of living

¹ Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of μαθητής in the New Testament," pp. 38-39.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Ibid., p. 28.

so as to imitate Him was for the purpose that the twelve disciples might in turn teach other men. This would further multiply the effectiveness and outreach of the ministry of Jesus Christ than if Jesus was to do all the teaching alone. Later, the writer will refer to how these same methods can be applied to discipleship situations today. The emphasis here is, Jesus taught His disciples so they in turn could teach other men. This method of teaching is expressed in the following:

The second reason was so that "He might send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out the demons." From this can be seen the emphasis on the role of the twelve in carrying on the work of Jesus. They were to be the means by which Jesus would reach others. It would be through their preaching.¹

In the relationship between Jesus and His disciples, the words of Jesus were important. But due to the fact that the Holy Spirit brought the words of Jesus to the remembrance of the disciples later after Jesus' ascension into heaven (Jn. 14:26), it was the character and the personality of Jesus Christ which had made the lasting impression upon the disciples. Indeed, to those who lived after the time of Christ and beyond the region where Jesus lived while He was on the earth, the character of Jesus Christ and His personality can only be seen by reading the words the apostles and their

¹Ibid., p. 39.

associates wrote in the Gospel accounts, since they were with Jesus and witnessed Him. Therefore, the disciples played an important role in being with Jesus to witness to His Person and works of miracles. This aspect of the relationship between Jesus and His disciples is stated in the following:

Further, there was little emphasis upon the "information-exchange" between Jesus and His disciples in terms of a "principle of tradition." The apparent summarization and condensations of Jesus' sermons by the writers indicates that the specific words of their Master were not that important to them. What was important to them and the key to this unique *διδασκαλος - μαθητης* relationship was the person of Jesus.¹

Rather than build a tradition of the words of Jesus, the disciples were commissioned to be witnesses of His works. The most important aspect of Jesus' life was what He did, specifically His cross work. His *μαθηται* were witnesses of this accomplishment (Acts 1:8), not recorders of His sayings nor "bearers of a tradition."²

The last relationship between Jesus and the disciples which has a bearing on discipleship is the fact that Jesus demanded total commitment, not only to His cause of preaching concerning the Kingdom of God and the Gospel, but also to Himself as a Person who is the incarnate God. Belief or trust in Jesus Christ's claims concerning His identity demanded surrender and top priority over any other relationships a man would have to any other person or possession. This was a

¹ Elliott, "Christian Discipleship," p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 6.

commitment too costly for any man to follow without supernatural help from God alone. The contrast between what Jesus expected and the Jewish rabbis is shown in the following:

Stemming from this was the commitment which had to be made to Jesus by His disciples. In Rabbinic Judaism a man was welcomed by a rabbi as long as he was willing to accept the rabbi's teaching, be faithful to him, and perform the duties that were expected of a תלמיד. But Jesus' call meant placing Jesus above all others, including oneself, giving up material possessions, obligating himself to suffer with Jesus, and accepting all costs before committing himself to Jesus (eg., Lk. 14:26-33).¹

The above discussion demonstrates that the price Jesus asked and the style of relationship He had with His disciples was unique compared with those teachers of the Greeks or rabbis.

The Varieties of Commitments Between Jesus and His Disciples

As Jesus travelled from one place to another, people associated with Him in varying degrees of relationships. These relationships were based on the words and works of Jesus to the people. Most of the time, the people followed Jesus not for what they could give to Him as their expression of service and love toward God, but for what Jesus could do for their needs. The people sought for Jesus not to fulfill

¹Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of μαθητής in the New Testament," p. 34.

their spiritual needs, but mainly their physical and material needs.

Jesus' own association with various groups of individuals was based upon the reasons and motives of their commitment to Him. Because of His omniscient personality, Jesus was able to perceive why men were truly following Him as disciples. Jesus' reactions to certain people and classes of disciples were based on their degree of commitment to the identity of Himself as God in human flesh.

What then were the various degrees of commitment the disciples had with Jesus? Some people notice three degrees of commitment while others notice four degrees of commitment. The question on the number or groups arises as to whether to include the twelve disciples as a separate group of their own, or whether to include them as just part of the believing disciples. The writer believes that Jesus Christ called the Twelve out from among the group of believing disciples and had a special ministry with them as this is verified in Scripture (Mk. 3:13-19). So there were actually four degrees of commitment among the disciples. However, J. Dwight Pentecost sees three groups of disciples in his book, Design for Discipleship. These three groups are called the curious, the committed, and

what may be called the completely or fully committed.¹ A man, though, will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible to fulfill the requirements of a fully committed disciple as these are related later in the paper.

The twelve disciples Jesus chose are commonly referred to as "the Twelve" in various sections of Scripture (Lk. 9:12). Generally they spent quality and a great quantity of time with Jesus as He taught the general public. They followed Jesus wherever He went. Jesus chose them from the smaller group of the totality of Jesus' disciples which comprised those who were believers. They had already made a confession of Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Messiah. However, as will be explained later, they were not disciples in Jesus' ultimate sense. The Twelve were the men Jesus taught so they in turn might teach others.

The Twelve were also those men Jesus sought to influence totally with His life so that their lives might also be changed. The following quotation explains the identity of the Twelve:

The majority of the uses of μαθητῆς refer to the specially chosen and individually called group of twelve disciples who are named specifically (Mt. 10; Lk. 6). Their

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Design For Discipleship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 14-21.

spiritual development is discussed frequently in the New Testament. All but one was a believer in Christ but none consistently met the requirements of true discipleship. Of all of those referred to as disciples of Christ, these twelve men were "His disciples" in a unique sense.¹

Another group of disciples followed Jesus just because of their interest. They were curious and wondered at Jesus' works and words. They made no outward or inward profession of faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Lord. This crowd of people who comprised the largest number of the disciples of Jesus just observed His miracles and heard Jesus' words, and were amazed. Most likely these individuals sought Jesus for material blessings only, with no spiritual intentions. These people are best identified in the following quotation:

A second distinct usage of the term refers to a large group of spiritually mixed "disciples." They were those who were drawn out of curiosity to follow Christ, listen to His teaching and observe His miracles. That many were not believers is indicated in John 6:64, 66. This general usage of the term is probably in view in Luke 6:17.²

Other men followed Jesus as disciples who were part of the group of believers and close associates of Jesus, but because of their timidity, they refused to publicly confess

¹ Rick Calenberg, "The Teachings of Christ on Discipleship" (Unpublished Theology Seminar Paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1976), p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 5.

they were followers and true believers in Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord. These disciples of Jesus Christ would most likely be the second largest group of disciples. Though they were believers in Jesus Christ, nevertheless they were large in number because many of the believers never made a public confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. John, in his Gospel account, places Joseph of Arimathea within this category of secret believers (Jn. 19:38). This fact is demonstrated by the following quotation;

A third usage of the term is best illustrated by the reference to Joseph of Arimathea as a "disciple" (Jn. 19:38). Here was a man who had evidently come to believe in Christ as Messiah but never followed Christ openly. Only after Christ's death did he in any way identify with Christ. There were undoubtedly many in the category who were true believers but had not identified publicly with Christ nor committed their lives in sacrificial discipleship to Him. Nonetheless they are called "disciples" of Christ.¹

Lastly, there exists a degree of commitment on the part of a disciple in which few if even any people attain. In fact, the requirements which Jesus Christ established for this degree of commitment extend far beyond the capabilities of any mortal man. Jesus Christ, by His very nature as the God-man and the One who determines the Law of God showing that all men are guilty before God, anticipated and expected no man to fulfill the demands of discipleship which He established. Only a perfect Man like Jesus Christ could fulfill

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

these demands since He is God. Therefore, the degree of commitment Jesus expected was total, and no man could attain such a degree of commitment without the supernatural help of God. Jesus addressed these superlative demands for discipleship to those who were already believers. He urged them to raise the degree of their commitment to His Person. Raising their degree of commitment would necessitate their reliance or trust in Jesus to help them fulfill His requirements of discipleship. Therefore, it is very probable that no man attained or will ever attain this degree of commitment advocated by Jesus, except Jesus, being God alone. These requirements will be studied more thoroughly in the second chapter of the thesis. The following quotation states this degree of commitment:

The final and most restrictive use of the term is found and defined in the passages to be discussed (eg. Lk. 14:26, 27, 33). It was Christ's desire that men who had believed on Him go on to make a total commitment to Him as their Master. Only then would they truly qualify as His disciples.¹

Therefore, there are four degrees of commitment among Jesus' disciples. These four degrees are the Twelve who were part of Jesus' special and intimate disciples, or followers, the committed, excluding the Twelve, the uncommitted, and the crowd at large who heard Jesus' message and saw His works.

¹Ibid.

Are All Believers Disciples?

One problem which confronts an individual studying the Scriptures is whether all believers are disciples. It is difficult to determine the answer to this question. The reason it is difficult is that the meaning of the word "disciples" is given differently for different contexts of Scripture passages. Sometimes it refers to believers as in Matthew 10, Luke 6, and John 19:38. However, in other places, the word, "disciples," refers to unbelievers, or those who followed Jesus in a large crowd as in John 6:64, 66 and Luke 6:17. How shall a person ultimately decide who is a disciple and who is not a disciple? What standard or criteria should one use to determine whether all believers are disciples?

From the fact that the Scriptures state that there were those in the midst of the followers of Jesus who were called "disciples," but had not placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, J. Timothy Coyle makes the following remark:

However from the study of the background of μαθητῆς and some of its uses in the New Testament, it can be seen that the word itself carries no implication of salvation. Also it is true that a person can learn something and not put it into practice. Thus a person can be called a disciple and not be a saved person. Perhaps the best example of this was Judas. It would certainly seem that those disciples who are referred to in John 6:60-66 had

not experienced true conversion either. Yet by their outward appearance they were considered disciples.¹

There is profit in examining the various contexts of Scripture in order to obtain a wide usage of the word disciple, rather than examining a few references and receiving a narrow vision of the meaning. However, the writer believes one should focus his attention on the references Jesus Christ made to discipleship when He made His ultimate demands for commitment. To whom did He address these ultimatums? Since Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, it is altogether fitting and proper that He be the authority as to whether all believers are disciples. Looking at the question from this view point, the writer must answer the question with a negative reply.

One criterion which can be used to show that all believers are not disciples is the manner in which Jesus addresses the Jews in John 8:31 that "had believed in Him." These Jews were already believers and they were now asked to remain in Jesus' word as a condition for being a disciple. Therefore, belief in Jesus Christ and being a disciple of Jesus Christ are two entirely different realms of service. One became a believer by faith whereas being a disciple means works as the following quotation states:

¹Coyle, "The Use and Meaning of μαθητής in the New Testament," pp. 44-45.

Some have raised the following questions; "Are not all believers disciples?" or "Is not discipleship and salvation the same?" The answer to these questions is a definite "No." Examining the conditions that Christ placed before His followers, it is evident that salvation and discipleship are not the same, or synonymous. John 8:31 is illustrative of this truth. Jesus addressed the statements of this verse to "those Jews who already believed in Him." They were saved men. If the meaning of these conditions is equivalent to salvation, then salvation is to be the result of works. This is a sheer impossibility for that would nullify the entire message of the epistles.¹

Another passage of Scripture, Luke 9:23-26, gives evidence, also, that all believers are not disciples. In Luke 9:25, Jesus states that He will "be ashamed" when He "comes in His glory" of anyone who is "ashamed of Me and My words." The meaning here intended is that there will be two kinds of believers, those who will be ashamed, and also those who will not be ashamed. There is no mention of any condemnation for these people such as not being able to enter heaven or undergo punishment in Hell. The significant element of this passage is that it (Lk. 9:26) follows Luke 9:23 which is a key verse in regards to cross-bearing, an element involved in discipleship. The following quotation shows this relationship;

Christ concluded with a reference to His future coming to reign, the day they were still expecting, not realizing

¹Abraham Thomas, "An Investigation of the Meaning and Significance of Believer's Cross-Bearing" (Unpublished M. Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 47.

that He must go away first. On that day He said there would be some of whom He would be ashamed (Lk. 9:26). There is no reference to removing them or casting them out of His Kingdom, only that He was ashamed of them.¹

Finally, as the second chapter will explain, all believers are not disciples in the ultimate meaning of the word as Jesus Christ used it. The demands which Jesus makes for a disciple are so perfect, pure, and righteous that no human can achieve them without depending on God to help him.

¹Calenberg, "The Teaching of Christ on Discipleship," pp. 16-17.

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST'S REQUIREMENTS OF A DISCIPLE

In the preceding chapter, the writer mentioned that Jesus demanded unconditional surrender, commitment, and loyalty to Himself, for He claimed to be the Messiah and God incarnate. In this chapter, it is necessary to determine exactly what Jesus did demand when He asked a person to become His disciple. What truly are the requirements of a disciple as Jesus Christ stated them? Also, can a person actually fulfill these requirements which Jesus demands, or are they unattainable? If a person truly wants to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, can he then attain to these standards apart from God's help?

At the outset the writer must state that the demands which Jesus Christ requires for being His true disciple are unattainable in their fullest, most complete sense by mankind. They necessitate the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit even to act on any requirement in the smallest degree. Therefore, the one who places his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is really the only person who can even partially meet Jesus' requirements, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. These requirements are addressed to believers. This necessity of a

person being a believer to even partially fulfill Jesus' requirements is demonstrated by the following;

We are forced to conclude that a person who submits to the authority of Jesus Christ in the sense of full and total commitment must be a believer. To believe we receive Him; to hate ourselves we give to Him. To establish the proper priorities as Jesus demands is completely foreign to an unsaved man.¹

The act of obeying these requirements necessitates that one is a believer in Jesus Christ. However, it is vitally important to realize that a person cannot obtain salvation by trying on his own power to fulfill these requirements. A man is not saved by doing good works, but through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Throughout the discussion, it is important to remember how much men lack in totally obeying these requirements.

Self-Denial and Cross-Bearing

Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27

In each of these passages, namely, Matthew 10:38; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; and Luke 14:27, Jesus mentions the necessity of one carrying or "taking up" his own cross in order to follow Jesus. There are some differences between the passages. In Matthew 10:38, Jesus stresses the

¹ Leslie D. Nutter, "The Interpretation of Luke 14:26, 27, 33 as Related to the Word Disciple" (Unpublished M. Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1973), p. 52.

point that unless a person takes up his cross, he is unworthy of Christ. In Luke 9:23, Jesus makes it plain that cross-bearing was to be a daily task. Cross-bearing is a requirement for being a disciple in Luke 14:27. Also, all the other passages such as Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, and Luke 9:23, with the exception of Luke 14:27 and Matthew 10:38, contain statements of the requirements of self-denial.

What do the words self-denial and cross-bearing mean? The word self-denial means that one relinquishes any dependence upon the old nature which is tainted and inherited through the original sin of Adam in the Fall, and that nature which is in rebellion against God. He trusts the new, divine nature within him to release him from serving self to serving others, namely the Lord. The following quotation gives a clearer perspective on this matter:

What, then, must a person do to be considered a true disciple? Well, if he wishes to come behind me, says Jesus, then first, he must deny himself; that is, he must once and for all say No to his old self, the self as it is apart from regenerating grace. A person who denies himself gives up all reliance on whatever he is by nature, and depends for salvation on God alone. He turns away in dismay not only from whatever thoughts and habits are patently sinful but even from reliance on "religious"--for example Pharisaic--thought patterns that cannot be harmonized with trust in Christ. See 2 Cor. 10:5. He must be willing to say with Paul, "Such things that once were gains to me these have I counted loss for Christ. .

¹William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 498.

Can a believer or anyone say that in this life he has truly denied himself of all things for the cause of Jesus Christ? The answer truly must be "No"! The very fact that people desire more material wealth and prestige in our society is indicative of the fact that greediness and lack of self-denial is a major problem in the world. This has been true habitually with every nation upon the earth in history. Therefore, it takes God's supernatural power to intervene in a man's life to satisfy the longing which greediness demands.

Cross-bearing does not literally mean that a man must bear a wooden cross, as used in the passages mentioned above. Here, cross-bearing is a figure of speech portraying a life and life style of ignominy, despisement, and suffering for the person who wants to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, as the following quotation demonstrates:

Thus, by the use of a common phrase, "take up the cross" which communicated shame, suffering and death, Jesus would have meant that His disciples were to accept suffering and dying as a character of life and a life style. Jesus would certainly not have meant immediate death by this phrase, for otherwise He would not have added *καθ' ἡμέραν*. The disciples were to keep on following (present tense) while taking up the cross *καθ' ἡμέραν*. This must be a figurative use for how can one be crucified *καθ' ἡμέραν* and still be following Him?¹

Now, are those who are desiring to be disciples of Jesus Christ really living a life of suffering, ignominy, and

¹Thomas, "An Investigation of the Meaning and Significance of Believer's Cross-Bearing," p. 37.

despisement? There are some sections of the world, such as Communist nations, where this may be the case. The only element which is often overlooked, however in this life style of shame for Christ is that Christ never tells how much suffering a man must endure. Must he endure the amount of suffering the Apostle Paul endured during his missionary journeys as mentioned in the book of Acts and his epistles? (2 Cor. 1:8). Whatever the suffering, though, as the endurance varies from one person to another, one must depend upon God's help to deliver him. Every person has a limit to his endurance of suffering beyond which he cannot bear in his own power, and must depend on God for strength.

Subservience and Identification

Matthew 10:24, 25; Luke 6:40

The statements Jesus makes in Matthew 10:24, 25 and Luke 6:40 relate to the position and rank between the teacher and the disciple. In each of these passages, the disciple must take a lower rank or position as he learns from his teacher. This is obvious and just, for the teacher is the person who has had more experience and knowledge in his field of study, and the person whom the learner is attempting to imitate. The statement in Luke 6:40 contains the idea of the student imitating the teacher for "after he has been fully trained," then the disciple will "be like his teacher." A

period of time is necessary for the training to take place before the disciple is like his teacher. The disciple must work as well as the teacher for him to become like the teacher. The following quotation demonstrates this principle of the disciple being like his teacher:

A μαθητής is one who has imbibed the spirit of his teacher. But as being one who is a disciple he remains under his teacher, for the thing that makes him what he is he has received and will always have received from his teacher.

The warning is idle that we must not stretch this too far since some pupils become more learned than their teachers. No matter how much a pupil advanced beyond his teacher, as a μαθητής of that teacher, the spirit he has imbibed from that teacher keeps him forever "under" that teacher. Many an illustrious man has acknowledged that with regard to his teacher. It is not the amount of knowledge that is involved in "disciple" but the character and the spirit that make him what he is.¹

In the whole sermon he is trying to imbue his disciples with his own spirit and his principles. Those who are at this time his disciples are such only because they have in some measure imbibed his spirit. They will thus never get above him, for if they absorb some other spirit they will become only renegades and apostates who are no longer "under" him but far from him. The relation expressed by Jesus is one that has no exceptions.²

In Matthew 10:25, the relationship between the disciple and the teacher is paralleled to that of the slave and his master. In each case, the person of lower rank is

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 377.

²Ibid.

encouraged to imitate his teacher. Further development of this concept of identification will await the final chapter of the thesis as to how it relates to the discipling ministry of the local church. Also, the final sentence of Matthew 10:25 relates the principle that the disciples should expect the same treatment, good or bad; in this case, bad, from those outside of the disciple-teacher relationship.

In what way then can a person become like Jesus Christ, since He is the Teacher of the Christian faith and all believers in Christ are under His supervision? The answer to this question lies in the fact that it is impossible apart from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. The perfect life which Christ lived while on earth is a witness in itself that such a life is impossible to live by a mortal, sinful man. Only the God-Man, Jesus Christ, could live the life of Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospel accounts (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

Also the fact that men are by nature rebellious, and desirous of power, makes it evident that mankind resists the submission and humbleness needed to learn from an authority whether human or divine.

Remaining in the Word, John 8:31

In John 8:31, Jesus Christ makes abiding or remaining in His Word a requirement for being a disciple of Jesus Christ

in the fullest, ultimate meaning of the word. In John 17: 7, 8, while praying in His high priestly prayer, Jesus mentions that He spoke the words of God the Father as He states, "now they have come to know that everything that Thou hast given Me is from Thee; for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee and they believed that Thou didst send Me." Therefore, by means of inspiration of Scripture (Jn. 14:26; Jn. 16:13-15), the words of Jesus Christ and God the Father, both Persons being one God, became the Scriptures. Jesus Christ's words are the words of Scripture. Therefore, abiding in Jesus Christ's words means abiding in the truths of Scripture. Jesus is stating, in John 8:31, that "if you remain true and orthodox in doctrine, then you are truly disciples of Mine." A person must interpret Scripture literally, grammatically, and historically, and adhere to the teachings of Scripture in order to abide in Jesus' Word.

Can an assembly or church of believers accomplish this requirement of remaining true to the Word of God without supernatural aid? The trend in the history of the Church is for a group of believers to remain faithful to a belief in the truths of God's Word for only a relatively short period of time. Then, false doctrine arises and schisms become necessary in order to maintain pure doctrine. The trend

throughout Church history is to move away from pure, orthodox doctrine toward apostasy and heresy.

The statement of Jesus in John 8:31, also can refer to a person obeying the Word of God as stated in the following:

One abides in the word of Christ by making it the rule of one's life. In other words, obedience is the same thing as abiding in the word. This makes one a true disciple of Jesus and leads to genuine knowledge of the truth (God's special revelation which has its heart and center in the work of Christ).¹

Can a person truly obey the Word of God and teachings of Jesus Christ with only human abilities? This answer refers to what was mentioned previously about the moral perfection of Jesus Christ's life and teachings as a witness in themselves to sinful man's inadequate attempts to obey them. It is impossible to obey the Word of God apart from God's help.

Love for Each Other, John 13:35

The fourth requirement Jesus gives for being His disciple in the highest and ultimate meaning of the word is to love one another. In the preceding verse, John 13:34, Jesus makes love a commandment and tells what kind or what manner of love His disciples should exhibit toward each other. The disciple of Jesus Christ should love another believer to the

¹ William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 52.

degree with which Jesus Christ loves him. How much does God love His disciple as shown by the life and death of Jesus Christ? Paul states in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of the world and His disciples displays the degree of love that one disciple should show to another believer. Jesus Christ, being the infinite God-Man, willingly gave His life in order to pardon and justify the innumerable offenses and violations of God's law, which rebellious mankind committed against a Holy God. This is the supreme demonstration of love. Given that example of Jesus Christ's infinite love, one must realize that no man can demonstrate that degree of love to another, apart from the supernatural aid of God's Holy Spirit. The following quotation further substantiates the necessity of God's helping to produce the quality of love which Jesus displayed:

The love that Christ demanded as the sign of relationship to Him, the sign of discipleship, was the sign that only the Spirit of God could produce. A man could impose circumcision on his son. A father could require Sabbath observance in his household. Only the Spirit of God can produce love for another believer. That is why love for one another is an indisputable proof that one is a disciple of Jesus Christ.¹

¹ Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 60.

Also, in John 13:35, Jesus states that the way that all men will be able to tell whether they are Christ's disciples is their love for one another. This implies a different kind of love than the world knows, because it states that all men will know if they are disciples of Jesus Christ by this type of love. It is the love which seeks the total welfare of the object of the love without any expectation of being loved in return. This ἀγάπη is only produced by God (1 Jn. 4: 7, 8). The following is a quotation describing how the divine love should exist between disciples:

The love about which Christ is speaking is a concern for the well-being of the object of one's affections. It is an occupation with that individual instead of an occupation with one's self. It is a care for the welfare of that person, a desire to see that his needs are met whether they be physical, material, mental, emotional, or spiritual. To be so occupied with another with the love of Christ is the badge of discipleship. The badge of a disciple of Satan is that he is occupied with himself. The badge of a disciple of Jesus Christ is that he is occupied with those whom Jesus Christ loves.¹

In order to portray the difficulty of man achieving this type of love, one should remember what one's natural or instinctive reaction would be if he, along with others, were involved in a serious accident. The action of a person most coinciding with human nature is to make certain that he himself

¹ Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 62.

was not harmed before rescuing the other people. The easiest and most natural thing is for a person to care and think only of himself (Phil. 2:21).

"Hate" for Family and Life, Luke 14:25, 26

This verse, Luke 14:26, contains the problem of the meaning of the word "hate" as it relates to one's own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and life. The Greek word, *μισειν*, means "to hate." One must seek other passages from Scriptural revelation by which to get a clearer perspective as to what Jesus means by "hate" in Luke 14:26 as it relates to one's family. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Other Scriptural passages speak of commands to love one's family, such as Ephesians 5:25, 28. Therefore, since God cannot contradict Himself (Num. 23:19), and comparing this verse in Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37, the solution to the problem is Jesus means that a love for one's family must be less in comparison with the love which one has for Jesus Christ. Also, this action of hating one's family and life refers to the abandonment of one's will from totally serving one's family and self to totally serving Jesus Christ as the following passage relates:

The message of Jesus must be found in parallel to that which characterizes the hate of God when the Psalmist says "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5). This is repeated in Hebrews 1:9, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness."

The intensity of action is not lost in this directive when seen in parallel with God's hatred for sin. The sin that requires this *μισέω* is contrasted with the life that is ruled by commitment and love. What Jesus is saying is that those who come as true disciples must relinquish their wills and become subservient to Him.¹

Is it possible for a person to love his family and himself less in comparison with his love for Jesus Christ? Again, the answer to this question is negative apart from God's supernatural power. In Philippians 2:21, it states, "For they seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus." Also, in 1 Timothy 5:8, it explains the necessity of spending time and seeing that one's household has provisions. Therefore, the natural tendency and practice is to be loyal to and seek the interests of one's family and self at a higher priority than love for Christ. Men constantly disobey God's command in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Surrender of Possessions, Luke 14:33

The problem often encountered with the meaning of Luke 14:33 is whether Jesus means by the verse that a person cannot

¹ Nutter, "The Interpretation of Luke 14:26, 27, 33 as Related to the Word Disciple," pp. 31-32.

have any material and earthly possessions. Rather, the meaning of "give up all his own possessions" is determined by what is one's allegiance to this material wealth in relation to one's allegiance to Jesus Christ and love for Him. This meaning is demonstrated by the following quotation:

This phrase sums up the conditions noted in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven and provides the link for the two illustrations found in the intervening five verses. As a basis for understanding this dictum given as a prerequisite for discipleship we should see that poverty is not implied nor any measurement of quantity of materialistic wealth is denoted. Rather the measurement of possessions is found in a proper recognition of the disciple's position in relation to his Lord.¹

If a person's allegiance to his possessions outweighs his allegiance to Christ, he cannot be a disciple in Christ's ultimate sense.

A person must recognize that God owns everything a person has and is the source of all wealth, as James 1:17 states, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow."

Can a man actually "give up all his own possessions" in the sense of complete loyalty, allegiance, and undivided attention to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Bible declares that this is impossible in human strength alone according to the

¹Ibid., pp. 42-43.

actions of the rich man in Mark 10:17-23. In verse 22 of Mark 10, the rich man refused to sell his property and give it to the poor, even though in Mark 10:17, the rich man asks Jesus, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Also, in Matthew 6:24, Jesus states, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Also, as mentioned earlier under the sub-heading, "Self-Denial and Cross-Bearing," the very fact that throughout history men have sought for riches and material wealth first, rather than spiritual salvation and growth in Jesus Christ, is proof that men cannot give up their possessions to absolute loyalty to Christ. Even the Church throughout the ages of history has had problems because its focus was centered upon earthly gain, rather than upon the spiritual salvation and development of souls. Men cannot surrender allegiance to possessions without God's help.

Priorities, Luke 9:57-62

Each of the three men in Luke 9:57-62 have a problem with priorities in their lives in regards to what place or allegiance Jesus holds in their lives. The man who said he would follow Jesus wherever he went, and the man who asked permission to say farewell to those in his home, each took

the initiative in saying they would follow Jesus. Jesus commanded the man who wanted to bury his father to follow Him. All of the men had more important things to do first before they followed Jesus. They did not give Jesus first place nor priority in following Him. Jesus shows His disapproval of the order of these men's priorities compared to the top priority which Jesus should occupy in their lives, as recorded in Luke 9:62. He states, "No one after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." In other words, when a person says he will follow Jesus, or "puts his hand to the plow," then rearranges his priorities in life to center his attention on temporal, earthly affairs, thereby "looking back," that man is not fit for the Kingdom of God. J. Dwight Pentecost gives three areas respectively where these men had priority problems.

The areas of priority problems for these men are materialism, self-sufficiency, and authority, respectively, for each of the men in the order in which they appear in the narrative. The man who wanted to follow Jesus wherever He went had the following problem:

This man, focusing attention on that which the Old Testament promised of Messiah's provision for His people, said, "I want to become a disciple of Christ so that I now might enter into the material benefits that He will provide for those who are His." He was not motivated by a love for the Person of Christ nor was he motivated by a

desire to submit his will to the will of Christ. He was greedy and selfish and materialistic in coming to offer himself as a disciple of Christ.¹

The man who asked Jesus permission to bury his father had this problem:

So, when Christ invited this man to follow Him, a mental process began to go on in his mind: My father has an inheritance to leave to me and, when my father leaves that inheritance, I will be self sustaining. Now, since Christ does not have material provisions to make for me, it would be wisest for me if I did not become a disciple until I can support myself; and, after I am independent, then I will become a disciple, completely committed to the Person of Jesus Christ.

What was this man's problem? He would not trust the Person of Christ to meet his needs as a disciple. This man was self-sufficient, independent, and he did not want to be obligated to Christ. Therefore, he would rather postpone the decision and the commitment to Christ until he did not have to depend upon Christ.²

The man who wished to say farewell to those at home had this problem in the following:

When this man asked to be permitted to go and bid farewell to them that were at his house, he was saying, "I recognize your authority but the authority of my father takes precedence over your authority and I can't do anything for you until I get my father's permission." This was a recognition of an authority other than the authority of Jesus Christ. Until a man is willing to recognize the absolute authority of Jesus Christ in his life, he is not and cannot be a disciple of Christ.³

¹Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 45.

³Ibid., p. 46.

Can a person truly place his top priority in following Jesus Christ without interference by earthly, temporary matters? As in answering the preceding questions, so also in answering this question, the answer is in the negative.

As an illustration of this problem of following Jesus Christ as a top priority in life, one needs only to hear an answer from a person who is either on the verge of accepting Jesus Christ as his Saviour, but is postponing it, or a person who has recently accepted Jesus Christ, but who fails to read his Bible, pray, witness, or fellowship with believers. People in these situations generally reply that they are "too busy with other matters" or they will "think about it another time," but "not for now." Once again, one cannot give Jesus Christ top priority in his life unless God aids him through supernatural power.

Planning and Counting the Cost, Luke 14:28-32

Jesus Christ gives two illustrations in Luke 14:28-32 of how important it is for a person to "count the cost," or plan before he makes a decision. The first illustration portrays a man who wants to build a tower. The decision, indeed, the wise decision he must make, is whether or not he should build the tower in the first place. He must have enough funds and materials. Otherwise, he will not complete the tower's construction and those who watch him building the tower will

ridicule him. He must determine the price he must pay before he builds the tower.

The second illustration is of a king who with his army of 10,000 men wants to go to battle with another king who has an army of 20,000 men. The king with an army of 10,000 men must determine if he can win against the man with 20,000 men, or seek peace before it is too late. In each of these illustrations, Jesus warns his hearers that before a person makes a decision to follow Him and be His disciple, he had better consider first the amount of hardship and demands which Jesus Christ and others place upon him.

How much of a cost does Jesus Christ wish His disciples to pay? The answer is how much did it cost God to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the world's sin? Jesus Christ voluntarily gave His life for the world, and He being an infinite God, demanded an infinite cost. Jesus Christ expects the same from His disciples. Because His disciples are finite, not infinite, He demands total surrender of a person's life. The cost for Jesus Christ's disciple may even mean physical death. The following quotation illustrates Christ's demand on His followers.

Now, our Lord was saying to those would-be disciples, when you consider this matter of discipleship, I am not asking if you are willing to commit ten or twenty or thirty or fifty percent to Me, I am demanding that you commit one hundred percent of what you have to Me. If you are not

willing to commit everything, if you are not willing to recognize My absolute right over every material thing that I have given to you, you cannot be My disciple.¹

The passage also discusses the necessity of planning in a person's life, because "counting the cost" involves taking inventory of a person's resources and power before he starts a job or makes a decision. This is important, as discipline in the use of one's time is vital to good discipleship.

Has any believer ever truly "counted the cost" as to how much he should endure before he makes a decision to follow Jesus as His disciple? Most people do not pay the full price of surrendering one's life while living, or becoming a martyr for Jesus Christ. Often, a person will follow Jesus Christ until persecution comes, then he will fail to "count the cost" for Jesus Christ and compromise. It takes only God's supernatural power to allow a person to willingly die, or give everything he has to follow Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as a result of the analysis and study of the preceding eight requirements of discipleship, the writer concludes that it is impossible for sinful, mortal men to attain the requirements which Jesus demands to be a disciple in the ultimate sense of the word. Even if a believer in Christ relies upon the Holy Spirit to help him achieve these

¹Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 78.

requirements, nevertheless, man's sinful, depraved nature forbids him from attaining the perfection required by Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE METHODS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Throughout the thesis, much of the discussion has related to the definition of a disciple, and the inability of men to meet the stringent requirements of a disciple as Jesus established them. This final chapter involves the application of some of the principles expounded earlier to a person's discipleship ministry. The Bible presents Jesus Christ as the Person who not only is the perfect Teacher, but also as God. His disciples are "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . ." (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, the goal of discipleship is Christlikeness in each believer. However, because of man's sin nature, total Christlikeness is impossible in the present condition of the earth. A further look at Christ's methods of discipleship will serve as an example which men may seek to apply to their situations.

Jesus Christ's Methods of Discipleship

Earlier in the first chapter of the thesis, the writer stated some of the features that characterized the relationship between Jesus and His disciples. Such features consisted of the following: Jesus took the initiative to call His disciples; Jesus spent many hours and days together with the

disciples; the disciples observed Jesus intently as He taught the multitudes, performed miracles, and instructed the disciples themselves; and finally, Jesus demanded the disciples' total commitment with the goal that they be like their Teacher. Jesus knew that He would only be in bodily form on earth for a short time, only about 33 years. If many more people were to learn how they could receive the gift of eternal life through belief in the death of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection, then Jesus would have to train and indoctrinate a small group of men to disseminate His teachings. However, Jesus not only gave the disciples, which He chose to indoctrinate, named The Twelve, factual information. By His perfect example and trust in God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus also showed how to live the commandments of God. In order to obey God's commandments and love Jesus, the Twelve first had to trust their eternal salvation in the name and work of Jesus Christ, the God-Man. Once the twelve disciples trusted Jesus Christ to save them from their sins, the twelve disciples had the power from God available to obey God's commandments, thus proving their love for Christ. Therefore, Jesus not only imparted His factual teachings to the twelve disciples, but also He lived His perfect life among them as an example of how to live. Jesus gave them the supernatural enablement to live the commandments of God when they believed on Him. The Christian life, then, is not just teaching disciples factual

rules and principles of living, but also acting on the principles in a person's daily life, or being obedient. Jesus declared, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15). Jesus expected the twelve disciples, later Apostles when they were commissioned, not only to record His words (Jn. 14:26), but also he expected their lives, and the lives of the people the Apostles instructed, to be righteous and holy. Discipleship, then, not only works with just one individual disciple's relationship with God, personally, but it also entails one regenerated believer in Christ teaching another regenerated believer in Christ how to live the Christian life by precept and example. Gary W. Kuhne in his book, The Dynamics of Discipleship Training states the following definition of discipleship training:

Discipleship training is the spiritual work of developing spiritual maturity and spiritual reproductiveness in the life of a Christian.¹

Now what were some of the methods Jesus used to achieve spiritual maturity and spiritual reproductiveness in the lives of His disciples?

In the book, With Christ in the School of Disciple Building, Carl Wilson discusses seven consecutive methods which

¹Gary W. Kuhne, The Dynamics of Discipleship Training (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 16.

Christ followed in building disciples. Carl Wilson states them as follows:

During the first step, John the Baptist and Jesus sought to lead people to Repentance and Faith. They called them to change their minds about their past life of sin and accept a new life with God. . . .

During the second step, Enlightenment and Guidance, Jesus helped His followers understand who He was so that they would trust Him as their leader. He taught them that He was the Messiah and He showed them His power--that of the glorious Son of God. . . .

In the third step, Ministry Training and Appreciation of Benefits, Jesus called men to commit themselves publicly to minister with Him, trusting God to draw men to Himself and help them grow. . . .

The fourth step is Leadership Development and Government Under God. In this step Jesus organized His Kingdom and gave men responsible leadership roles, instructing them and giving them authority. . . .

The purpose of the fifth step, Reevaluation and Separation, is to bring a person to trust God for the eternal things of life above the temporal. . . .

During the sixth step, Participation and Delegation, Jesus brought His disciples to the point of trusting Him both to work in other members of the body and to cope with those outside of and suspicious of the body of Christ. . . .

In the seventh step, Exchanged Life and Worldwide Challenge, a person learns how to rest in the sufficiency of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit.¹

One should observe, in the methods which Christ used with His disciples, that He slowly, yet ever constantly and increasingly, gave His disciples more responsibility. Soon, the disciples, now become apostles, were able to lead the Church's direction on earth, while Christ guided the Church from Heaven.

¹Carl Wilson, With Christ in the School of Disciple Building (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 63-65.

Application of Christ's Methods of Discipleship

How, then, are some of the discipling methods of Jesus Christ applied to discipling present day believers?

First, in relation to Matthew 28:19, commonly called the Great Commission, Jesus states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . ." The word for "make disciples," *μαθητεύσατε* (Aorist Active Imperative, second person plural), has implicit within it the fact of evangelism as a pre-requisite to disciple-building. Before a person can be disciplined, he must place his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Gary Kuhne states the following in regards to Matthew 28:19:

An examination of this passage in more depth will uncover an unusual fact. Nowhere is the command directly given to evangelize. Yet, in spite of this fact, this passage is usually given as a challenge for witnessing. Since the main verb of the passage is "to disciple," the core of Christ's command was to go and make disciples. It should be obvious that, implicit in making disciples, it is necessary to first evangelize and win a person to Christ.¹

In Luke 6:40, Jesus states, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Discipleship takes time. A person cannot learn the principles of the Christian life in only a few days. It takes months and years for a person to become

¹Kuhne, Gary W. The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 21.

trained to the point where he can use what he has learned to disciple others.

The passage in Luke 6:40 also deals with the fact that the goal of the disciple is to be like his Teacher. In the Christian's life, Jesus Christ is the Master Teacher whom the disciple is to emulate, but he is to follow other believers as they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Cor. 4:16).

In John 8:31, Jesus declared, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine." This applies to the disciple in that the disciple, no matter how old he is in the faith, must constantly be reading the Word of God to grow daily (1 Pet. 2:2). Also, John 8:31 states that the disciple must constantly become discerning in the matter of doctrine, so that he will be able to distinguish the truth from error (Heb. 5:14).

In Mark 3:14, Jesus chose the twelve disciples "that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach." One of the most important factors in disciple-building is that the student be with his teacher. The student cannot learn well or will not motivate himself as much unless he has frequent contact with the teacher.

The practical outworking of the Christian life is made more perfect in the life of the new believer as he receives correction from the Word of God and other believers who are

more mature in the faith. Also positive qualities can be observed in other believers as he interacts with them on a personal level. Robert E. Coleman states the following:

"Knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of law and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them. His disciples were distinguished, not by outward conformity to certain rituals, but by being with Him, and thereby participating in His doctrine (John 18:19).¹

The Character of a Disciple and a Discipler

The goal of both the disciple and the discipler, or teacher, is to be Christ-like in character. Both the teacher and the disciple should strive to develop the qualities in their life which God requires of an elder and a deacon in 1 Timothy 3, and also the fruits of the Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹Robert E. Coleman, The Master Plan of Evangelism (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), pp. 38, 39.

CONCLUSION

The meaning of the word "disciple" is basically a learner. The relationship between the teacher and the disciple is not only for the purpose of communicating factual information, but also for the purpose of communicating a life style and a character to another person. All believers are not disciples in the ultimate meaning of the word as Jesus defined it. Jesus' requirements for being a disciple are so stringent and demanding for men, that no man can attain them without supernatural help. Jesus sought to train His disciples so that they would be able to assume the leadership of the Church. The disciples needed to depend on God alone for help as they sought to impart the same teachings they learned from Jesus Christ to others while Jesus is in heaven. Each person today should use Jesus Christ's techniques of training disciples in order to build church congregations which are more spiritually mature. Also, the goal of all disciples is to become like Christ in character (Rom. 8:29).

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