

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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I. THE MEANING OF DISCIPLESHIP

The term “disciple” means “to make one a learner.” It always involves a teacher-student relationship.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had many

Matthew 9:10 (KJV)

¹⁰ *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and **his disciples**.*

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20 (NLT)

¹⁶ *Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!*

¹⁸ *Jesus came and told his disciples, “**I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.** ¹⁹ **Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.** ²⁰ **Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”*

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF DISCIPLES

The word “discipleship” is used in the New Testament of three different categories of learners:

1. THE CURIOUS DISCIPLE

In the first category of learners, there are those who are curious disciples:

- Those who show curiosity about the words, the teachings, and the doctrines concerning Jesus.

John 8:31 (KJV)

³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;***

The group in this context is those who were merely curious. Jesus pointed out that they would prove to be true disciples when they go from curiosity to truly accepting that which He is teaching.

2. THE CONVINCED DISCIPLE

The second category of learners is the convinced disciples.

These start out as being merely curious, but they have now become convinced of the truth of what Jesus has been teaching.

They are convinced that what Jesus says of Himself is true. What they are not willing to do is make a commitment to it; they are not willing to risk their lives on it.

John 2:11 (KJV)

¹¹ *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and **his disciples believed on him.***

These disciples were convinced disciples. They were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, but at this point, they were not willing to risk their lives on it.

Among the convinced disciples, there are people that could not accept the truths Jesus taught them and chose to leave.

John 6:60-66 (KJV)

⁶⁰ *Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*

⁶¹ *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, **Doth this offend you?***

⁶² *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*

⁶³ *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

⁶⁴ *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*

⁶⁵ *And he said, **Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.***

⁶⁶ ***From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.***

This, too, is the second category of learners, the convinced disciples.

They were thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, but were not willing to risk their lives on it. When He taught them some deep truths, they were unable to accept them and chose to leave Him at that point.

We have in this group of disciples, people that are not ready to depart from sin and follow Jesus fully.

John 8:31-34 (KJV)

³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;***

³² ***And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.***

³³ *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

³⁴ *Jesus answered them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.***

3. THE COMMITTED DISCIPLE

There is the curious disciple and the convinced disciple.

Neither one of these two categories actually deals with what we mean by discipleship in the spiritual life, but the third one does.

The third type is the committed disciple.

The committed disciple is the one willing to follow the truth no matter where it leads, no matter what he must suffer.

It means to:

- identify with Jesus' rejection,
- To bear the cross of total commitment in order to attain this commitment.

Here is the kind of disciple spoken of:

John 6:67-69 (KJV)

⁶⁷ Then said Jesus unto the twelve, *Will ye also go away?*

⁶⁸ Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

⁶⁹ And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Here, Peter and ten of his fellow-disciples were expressing the third category of learners. They had started out as being curious, they became convinced, and now they were committed.

It is the committed disciple that we are speaking of when we talk about discipleship and the spiritual life.

This category is spoken of again:

Luke 9:23-26 (KJV)

²³ And he said to them all, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

²⁴ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

²⁵ For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

²⁶ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

What is discipleship among those who are the committed disciples?

The best way of defining discipleship is the following:

2 Timothy 2:2-4 (KJV)

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

³ Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

⁴ No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Notice the three-stage progression.

1. Paul disciple Timothy and Timothy learned many truths from Paul
2. Timothy was to find other people whom he could disciple and he would teach the same truths to them.
3. They in turn will find others to disciple and teach them.

This is discipleship: being willing to commit oneself totally to the Lord, to the study of Him and to follow the truth, no matter where it leads.