

THE DILEMMA OF DISCIPLESHIP

LUKE 9: 23 & 24

DILEMMA IS A PROBLEM OFFERING TWO POSSIBILITIES, NEITHER OF WHICH IS UNAMBIGUOUSLY ACCEPTABLE OR PREFERABLE. ONE IN THIS POSITION HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY DESCRIBED AS “BEING ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA” NEITHER HORN BEING COMFORTABLE, AND PERHAPS EQUALLY UNCOMFORTABLE (AND DANGEROUS).

DISCIPLESHIP: HAVING THE ROOT WORD (DISCIPLE) WHICH DENOTES THAT IN CHRISTIANITY, THE TERM DISCIPLE PRIMARILY **REFERS TO STUDENTS OF JESUS** AND IS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ONLY IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS. THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORDS MANY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS DURING HIS MINISTRY BUT ONLY SOME BECAME DISCIPLES.

NOTE: RIGHT AWAY DISCIPLESHIP IMPLIES LEADERSHIP AND ONE WOULD SAY: THE CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP IS:

1. TO BE STRONG BUT NOT RUDE
2. BE KIND BUT NOT WEAK
3. BE BOLD BUT NOT BULLY
4. BE THOUGHTFUL BUT NOT LAZY
5. BE HUMBLE BUT NOT TIMID
6. BE PROUD BUT NOT ARROGANT
7. HAVE HUMOR BUT WITHOUT FOLLY.

SO RIGHT HERE IS A GUT PUNCH FOR ALL OF US SITTING HERE IN THIS ROOM.

JESUS MAKES A VERY PROFOUND STATEMENT IN SAYING THIS TO ALL OF US WHO CLAIM TO BE FOLLOWERS OR DISCIPLES OF CHRIST:

- A. IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME
- B. LET HIM DENY HIMSELF
- C. AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY
- D. AND FOLLOW ME.

THEN HE SAYS: FOR WHOSOEVER:

1. WILL SAVE HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT.
2. BUT, WHOSOEVER WILL LOSE HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE, THE SAME SHALL SAVE IT.

THE MAJOR PROBLEM WITH MANY OF US:

A. IS THAT WE TEACH IT BUT WE DON'T:

1. LIVE IT
2. BELIEVE IT
3. OR FOLLOW IT LET ALONE TEACH IT.

THE COST OF BEING WHO WE SAY WE ARE IS EXPENSIVE:

The Cost of Discipleship - "Sit Down First and Count the Cost"

What is the cost of discipleship? Jesus said, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it - lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:28-33). "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:25-26)

The Cost of Discipleship - Paul Knew the Cost

The Apostle Paul understood the cost of discipleship! He was a man who enjoyed great prominence among the Jewish elite, but forsook all for the love of Christ! Paul declared, "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." (Philippians 3:7-9)

The Cost of Discipleship - From Carnal to Christian

The cost of discipleship is this: We must each give up our old selves in order to embrace and become the person Christ has created us to be. Therefore "put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9-10), for "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14), rather, "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). But even though "we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), "...you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" (Colossians 1:21-22). Thus, having been "reconciled to God through the

death of His Son" (Romans 5:10), you have received "exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). Therefore, "do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16). "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12:25-26).

The Cost of Discipleship - A Final Word

The cost of discipleship is totally reasonable in light of the gift we've been given! "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Simply put, you were "bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

All of us who claim to be Christian are called to discipleship. This poses some challenges for us. How can we answer the call to discipleship in a community of plenty and in a nation of growing disparity between rich and poor? How can we be in solidarity with the poor and marginalized of our society while enjoying an abundance of life's blessings? In a world that surrounds us with illusive and empty promises, where and how do we find the truth?

I recall that I have been blessed with a good education and many connections around the world. This fact gives me a lot of power which I must claim and know it is not for domination or self-service but for service and action on behalf of those without power.

Every day, my basic needs are met, including access to healthcare. I must remind myself every day that the security I enjoy is not for me alone. It challenges me to use the secure base that I have, to befriend and walk with those without life and hope and basic necessities. It frees me to challenge systems and structures that are not life giving and to offer resistance on behalf of those suffering and hope for a better future.

I can use the connections I have made to heighten awareness of the plight of so many and to invite them to share their time and resources to build caring and inclusive communities. I can use my time to make my community and our world a better place for all its inhabitants. We live in a stratified society. We have the leaders and the followers, those who minister and those ministered to. When we work with struggling people we must remember it is their goal we are helping to accomplish, not our own. We are more than workers doing a job. We are witnesses. Do we allow the Spirit of God to inspire us, work through us and shine beyond us?

How do we need to be transformed to more clearly reflect the face of Jesus to those we serve? How do we work to sustain the dream of the people and the dream of Jesus over the long haul? Gandhi reminds us "We must be the change we want to see happen."

Synopsis

The people we think would make good disciples are not always the ones the Lord thinks will make good disciples. The men the Lord chose as his disciples were certainly not the brightest, most wealthy, nor were they the most influential group in their communities. They were young, middle class Galileans—a diverse group without any formal, theological training. This is a real critique regarding some of our attitudes about the kind of people we think will make good disciples. We don't want to discourage the wealthy from becoming Christ's disciples, but we shouldn't think that just because a person does well in business, they will necessarily make good Disciples of Christ. These are some of the issues we need to give serious thought to. And, finally, the article ends with a discussion of the process of discipleship and the relevance of NT discipleship for today, including ideas of lifelong service and the sequence of discipleship.

Questions

1. What do you think about the kind of people Jesus chose as his disciples?

2. Is being well educated a hindrance to being a disciple of Christ? Why? Why not? How does the fact that a *disciple* is supposed to be a *learner* comport with this idea that to be a Christian you have to “check your brain out at the door,” so to speak?
3. Describe the process of NT discipleship.

The Article: Discipleship: Its Requirements and Its Rewards

Synopsis

This article, as the title implies, is centered around two aspects of discipleship, namely, its requirements and rewards. The requirements of discipleship include putting Christ first, valuing him above life itself, and certainly above all our material possessions. In short, the true disciple is the one who has learned to die to himself/herself, take up their cross daily, and follow the Lord. But the rewards for such a person are great. First, they will experience the presence and gentleness of the Lord. Second, God will never ask them to do anything that his grace cannot achieve through them. Third, committed disciples have the opportunity to know the Lord better because he reveals his innermost thoughts to such as these.

Questions

1. What does it mean to put Christ first in your life?
2. What is the proper relationship between Christ and ourselves and our material possessions?
3. What is the relationship between God’s grace and the process of discipleship?
4. What are the rewards for the person who draws near to God in the process of obedience (i.e., discipleship)?

Do Real Life Stories Testimony Books help in the making of a disciple?

It is very hard to disciple people in this day and age because it takes time and commitment. Jesus disciplined people for 2 or 3 years. There is no way we can get people to make that kind of commitment today.

To be able to disciple someone you must get some kind of a commitment from them.

We have found that, if you can get a Christian to commit to write out their testimony and commit to share it daily, that this commitment sets the stage for the Holy Spirit to disciple them!

The first thing we challenge people to do in our discipleship teaching is to commit to write their testimony and be a part of a Real Life Stories Christian Testimony Book.

The second thing we do is challenge people to carry 2 copies of the Real Life Stories Christian Testimony in their hand every time they leave the door of their home and every time they get out of their car.

The third thing we do is challenge them to ask the Holy Spirit to help them in the giving away of the books!

The commitment to carry the books, joined with the commitment to ask the Holy Spirit to help them, sets the stage for the Holy Spirit to be active in their life!

If a person is always carrying the Gospel message with them in the form of a Real Life Stories Christian Testimony Book, then they are always trusting in the Holy Spirit to help them! This gives the Holy Spirit total access to all their Time and Daily Life!

What we accomplish during our 12 Discipleship Sessions is getting a strong commitment from the person being disciplined to allow the Holy Spirit to lead them into living a Witnessing Lifestyle!

If you would like to know more about "Making Disciples" I suggest that you study everything at this link and all the

links connected to that page. For what we teach to work you must have a complete understanding of everything on this page and linked to this page:

5. What areas of your Christian experience (mind, emotions, will, and relationships) need to be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in terms of discipleship? Give careful thought and extended prayer before you answer.

THE 12 DISCIPLES OF JESUS WERE THE FOUNDATION STONES OF HIS CHURCH.

AS WE STUDY THESE COURAGEOUS FIRST CENTURY LIVES AND WHAT DISCIPLESHIP MEANT IN THE TIME OF JESUS, WE MAY EXPECT TO BE AIDED IN DEVELOPING A SPIRIT DIRECTED 21ST CENTURY DISCIPLESHIP AS CHRIST MUST HAVE MEANT IT TO BE.

ANDREW: THE BROTHER OF PETER WAS A FISHERMAN BEFORE JESUS CALLED HIM. KNOWN FOR BRINGING OTHERS TO THE MASTER. WAS CRUCIFIED ON AN X SHAPED CROSS.

BARTHOLOMEW OR NATHANIEL: CAME FROM ROYAL BLOOD OR A NOBLE BIRTH. WAS CALLED BY JESUS “ AN ISRALITE INDEED IN WHOM THERE IS NO GUILT. (JOHN 1:47)
DIED AS A MARTYR FOR HIS LORD. HE WAS FLAYED ALIVE WITH KNIVES.

JAMES THE ELDER: SON OF ZEBEDEE AND SALOME AND BROTHER OF JOHN, A NOBLE FISHERMAN. A MAN OF COURAGE AND FORGIVENESS. A MAN WITHOUT JEALOUSY, LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF HIS BROTHER JOHN, AND A MAN OF EXTRODINARY FAITH.

DIED: BEING BEHEADED BY HEROD.

JAMES THE LESSER OR THE YOUNGER: SON OF ALPHEUS. LIVED IN GALILEE. HE WAS THE BROTHER OF JUDE. HE WROTE THE EPISTLE OF JAMES PREACHED IN PALESTINE AND EGYPT. BROTHER OF MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR
DIED: CRUCIFIED IN EGYPT.

JOHN: OFTEN CALLED THE BELOVED DISCIPLE AND A FISHERMAN WHO LIVED IN BETHSAIDA. WAS A MEMBER OF THE INNER CIRCLE OF JESUS. BANISHED TO THE ISLE OF PATMOS AND WAS LATER FREED AND DIED A NATURAL DEATH. AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE ON HIS LIFE BY GIVING HIM A CHALICE OF POISON FROM WHICH GOD SPARED HIM.

JUDAS: ISCARIOT, THE TRAITOR. WAS THE SON OF SIMON WHO LIVED IN KERIOTH OF JUDAH. HE BETRAYED JESUS FOR 30 PIECES OF SILVER AND LATER HUNG HIMSELF. IT WAS NOT HIS BETRAYAL THAT PUT JESUS ON THE CROSS, IT WAS OUR SINS.

JUDE OR THADDEUS: WAS THE BROTHER OF JAMES THE YOUNGER. NOT VERY WELL KNOWN BUT LIVED IN GALILEE. KNOWN AS A MAN WITH (3) NAMES. HE DIED A MARTYR IN PERSIA KNOWN ASLO AS A VERY VIOLENT NATIONALIST WITH THE DREAM OF WORLD POWER AND DOMINATION BY THE CHOSEN PEOPLE. HE WANTED PEOPLE TO KNOW JESUS AS A RULING KING AND NOT AS A SUFFERING SAVIOR.

MATTHEW OR LEVI: LIVED IN CAPERNAUM. HE WAS A PUBLICAN OR TAX COLLECTOR. AND DIED A MARTYR IN ETHIOPIA. HE NAME MEANS "GIFT OF GOD". KNOWN AND VIGOROUSLY HATED BY THE JEWS FOR COLLECTING TAXES BECAUSE MOST TAX COLLECTORS WERE NOTORIOUSLY UNJUST.

PETER: WAS A FISHERMAN WHO LIVED IN BETHSAIDA AND CAPERNAUM. HE WAS A MARRIED MAN. HE DID EVANGELISTIC AND MISSIONARY WORK AMONG THE JEWS, GOING AS FAR AS BABYLON. WAS A MEMBER OF THE INNER CIRCLE. KNOWN FOR DENYING JESUS. PETER HAD MANY FAULTS BUT HE HAD ALWAYS THE SAVING GRACE OF THE LOVING HEART. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES HE HAD FALLEN AND FAILED, HE WLWAYS RECOVERED HIS COURAGE AND INTEGRITY HE DIED BEING CRUCIFIED UPSIDE DOWN BECAUSE HE FELT HE WAS NOT WORTHY TO DIE AS HIS LORD HAD DIED.

PHILIP: PREACHED IN PHRYGIA. HE CAME FROM BETHSAIDA WHERE PETER AND ANDREW CAME FROM. HE WAS BELIEVED TO BE ONE OF THE 7 ORDAINED DEACONS YET HE LED THE ETHIOPIAN EUNICH TO CHRIST. HE WAS A MAN WITH A WARM HEART AND A PESSIMISTIC HEAD. HE DIED A MARYTR IN HIERAPOLIS.

SIMON THE ZEALOT: ONE OF THE LITTLE KNOWN FOLLOWERS WAS ALSO CURCIFIED. THE ZEALOTS WERE FANATICAL JEWISH NATIONALIST. WERE SUPER CRAZY HATERS FOR THE ROMANS.

THOMAS LIVED IN GALILEE. APPEARS IN THE RAISING OF LAZARUS WOULD NOT BELIEVE IT WS JESUS UNLESS HE SEE THEA NAILPRINT IN HIS HAND AND THE SPEAR GASH IN HIS SIDE. ALWAYS WILL BE LABELED AS DOUBTING THOMAS. DIED AS A MARTYR.