

CHAPTER 10



LAITY LEADING in DISCIPLESHIP

CHAPTER 10

LAITY LEADING in DISCIPLESHIP

Life as a Disciple

Disciples are followers of Jesus. In Mark 1:16-18 in the Message Bible, it says: "Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. Jesus said to them, 'Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.'"

Discipleship is characterized by three actions:

-Giving our hearts to God. Once we say yes to God and accept him as our Lord and Savior, we start a life long process of having our hearts changed. Our relationship with God requires that our lives be shaped and molded into what he wants us to be. So how do we do that?

-Giving our minds to God thru study. We are changed and molded by study of God's words, and words from others about God. The word "disciple" means "to be a learner, a pupil of a master." Study can be done in so many ways. Traditional group Bible studies, individual Bible studies, and books by Christian authors. But there are many non-traditional ways as well. Many disciples now participate in "on-line" studies, blogs, and social networking site studies. It does not matter what method works for you, just be consistent in your study of God's word and God's ways.

-The last characteristic of a disciple is Christian Action; giving our hands and feet to Christ. Mission works, evangelism, mentoring other Christians are all types of action that pleases God.

Being a disciple of Jesus is a balance of these three areas of our Christian walk. We each find an area that comes easily for us and we find ourselves gravitating towards that characteristic. We must balance all three to be an effective leader for Christ and his church.

Discipleship is a process. A process of becoming the whole person God calls each of us to be through our relationship with Jesus Christ. A disciple seeks to become like Christ, to find and embrace God's will for their lives. What exactly does that mean? Let's look at five things a follower of Christ is:

-A disciple is a growing person: A disciple learns to live fully by faith in Christ. We grow in our capacity to love God in all circumstances and to love all people, not just the ones that look like us, or act like us.

-A disciple is a minister: You do not have to be a clergy person to be a minister. We are **all** called to be a partner in Christ's work here on earth. Just like Simon and Andrew were called from their fishing nets to fish for men and women, we are called to help others become disciples too.

-A disciple is a full time Christian: You can't put on a Christian Costume on Sunday morning and Wednesday night and a couple other times a year, leaving it to hang in the closet the rest of the time. Being a Christian is a full time job. 24/7. It is a way of life, to live each and every day according to Jesus' teachings.

-A disciple is a witness to Christ: Disciples are living evidence of God's grace and Christ's resurrection. When we live the life of a disciple of Jesus, we point others to him.

-And lastly, a disciple is a Christian Leader: Jesus called Simon and Andrew and the other 10 out of the world to be leaders. Jesus still calls us today to be set aside from the world and to lead others to a life in grace through him. We are not leaders like leaders of the world, but our leadership is characterized by servanthood.

There are six natural qualities of a disciple:

-A disciple knows their priority. A priority gives us a course to follow and challenges us to live up to our God-given potential.

-A disciple has discipline. It takes discipline to live your life each and every day following Jesus' examples. It takes discipline to use the gifts God gives us to do ministry. It takes discipline to attend church every week, to give of our presence, prayers, gifts, service and witness.

-A disciple knows reality. Knowing where you are and what is going on around you. As a disciple, we need to recognize the people God is putting in front of us to help. We need to keep a clear head, and warm heart, and both feet on the ground. We need to understand the reality around us so we can serve him.

-A disciple shows empathy. Empathy is the capacity to participate in another's feelings or ideas. As Atticus Finch tells his daughter Scout in the book To Kill a Mockingbird, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view-until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." We need to be able to identify and understand other people's feelings, ideas, and experiences-even if we haven't had them ourselves.

-A disciple takes initiative. As a child of God, he wants us to act when the situation calls for it. For example, when we hear that someone has come home from the hospital, we should be taking food to them, or calling and see if they need us to do anything for them. We should be taking the lead, not waiting for the world to act.

-And lastly, a disciple is generous. We understand that all we have comes from God; therefore we should freely give it to those who need it. And I am not just talking about money here. We also need to be generous with our gifts and talents and time that God has given us so the whole world will know Jesus. One person has said, "Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." A disciple does not withhold the living bread from a starving world.

And then the Holy Spirit gives disciples certain spiritual qualities-manifestations of God's gift of grace.

-The first of these qualities is Faith. A disciple must have a lively faith. Not just believing that God exists (don't forget, the devil even knows there is a God.) But a faith that gives us conviction that Jesus is Lord, that following Christ is worth the risk, and that with God all things are possible. We may not always have total understanding of how God works, but we can say, "God can do anything, and I want to be a part of what God is doing."

-Second is humility. In Philippians chapter 2 it talks about us being humble like Christ. Verses 1-4 says: "If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care-then do me a favor; Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with

getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.” (The Message Bible)
We need to strive to be humble like Christ. We need not be concerned who gets the credit when God’s work is being done.

-Third is hope. A disciple is sustained by hope in God. When human hope ends, hope in God begins. A disciple remembers that our Savior is risen! That the tomb was found empty that first Easter morning! That is where our hope is found!

-And lastly is love. A disciple loves. Loves all; knowing that every person matters to God. This kind of love gives us the willingness to sacrifice for others. Out of love, a disciple wants to share the good news of grace with others and be present for others in times of need.

We read about two kinds of people in the Gospels. The crowds who sought out Jesus because they were hungry and sick and wanted to be fed and healed. These crowds were curious, but not committed.

Then there were the followers of Jesus, the disciples. The few who heard his call to follow, committed their lives to him, and put their faith into action. The same two groups exist today. Each of us must decide—to be part of the crowd, or to be a disciple of Jesus. Becoming a disciple doesn’t happen overnight. There will be set backs and back sliding—but God’s grace is big!