

Equipping Pastors International

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Lesson #2

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jesus Christ never hid the fact that to follow Him there was a demand as well as an offer. He offers all that come to Him a free and gracious salvation wherein one is given eternal life, made a son of God, and freed from the wrath to come.
- B. Yet it is also true that while He offers men salvation, He demands their allegiance and submission to Him. There is a price to pay for every person who follows the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is free, but the effects of salvation often cost much.

II. DISCIPLESHIP DEFINED

- A. Meaning of Disciple: A disciple, in the most general sense, is a learner. Usually it implies that the person not only accepts the views of the teacher, but that he is also in practice an adherent. A longer definition of a disciple is *"one who believes Christ's doctrines, rests upon His sacrifice, imbibes His Spirit and imitates His example."*
- B. Usage of Disciple: (1) Disciples of John the Baptist—John 3:25; (2) Disciples of the Pharisees—Matt. 22:16; (3) Disciples of Moses—John 9:28; (4) Original twelve disciples of our Lord—Matt. 10:1; (5) Genuine disciples of Christ who are "born again" Christians—Acts 11:26; and (6) Professing disciples who were never converted—John 8:31; 6:66.

III. DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHURCH AGE

- A. A popular, yet incorrect, view on a disciple is that discipleship is for those who were written to in the four

gospels but not for modern-day Christians because the believer in the Church Age guides his life by the epistles and not by the gospels which were written primarily to Israel.

- B. The correct view is that the concept of a disciple was still very prevalent in the Book of Acts which was written in 61 A.D., about 28 years after our Lord's death and the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church spoken of in Acts 2. Thirty times the word "disciple" is used in Acts and its last occurrence is in Acts 21. In Acts 11:26 it says that *the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch*. As the gospel spread to the Gentile nations, the title of disciple seemed to fade and the words Christian and believer seem to become prominent. NOTE: The concept of disciple, Christian and believer are all the same according to the Bible. Therefore, we can conclude that the word "disciple" was applied to Christians who were definitely in the Church. All Christians, therefore, are disciples.

IV. DISCIPLESHIP AND BELIEVERSHIP

- A. According to the New Testament, no distinction can be made between a believer and a disciple. One does not become a believer and then a disciple. He becomes a believing-disciple the moment he receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. A disciple and a Christian are synonymous. NOTE: This is the same thing as saying that Christ cannot be Savior without being one's Lord.
- B. A person may be a strong or weak disciple, a faithful or unfaithful disciple, but he is a disciple. NOTE: Since every Christian is a disciple, then all the Lord's teaching on discipleship applies to every Christian.

V. DISCIPLESHIP AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

- A. Introduction: The Great Commission, in its final form, was given at the end of the Lord's forty-day postresurrection ministry to His disciples (Matt. 28:16-20).

This command is for all Christians, even though it was directly given to the eleven disciples. The original twelve disciples have all died, but the Commission is to go on until the "end of the age (world)," referring to the second advent. Therefore, it must apply to all Christians, not just the original twelve. We live in what the Bible calls the "present age" or the time span between the first and second advents of Christ.

- B. The Men
 1. The Disciples Were Obedient to Christ. The disciples went to Northern Galilee to meet the Lord as He had commanded them. It says "some doubted" but the Greek word does not mean they were lacking faith but rather they were hesitant. They were uneasy and apprehensive because they still did not completely understand what the Lord intended to do with them. Furthermore, the disciples had identified themselves

with Christ and were "hunted men." They had good reason to be hesitant. They were uneasy, anxious and fearful, but they obeyed the Lord because they trusted Him.

2. The Disciples Worshiped the Lord. Whatever fear they experienced, they had a heart for Christ. They had an open mind and were ready to do His will even if they did not understand it completely.
3. The Disciples Were Only a Small Band of Men. There were only eleven disciples originally (Paul made the twelfth), a handful of insignificant men, who were to go out and turn the world upside-down for Christ. These men probably had never been out of the area of Palestine and never traveled more than 50 miles from home. They were committed to a person who had no financial backing, no political machine behind him and had been rejected by his own Jewish nation and the Roman government. Yet Christ tells them, "**Go . . . and make disciples of all nations.**" What was their source of power to accomplish this task? It was not their size or their power but the divine authorization given them by the Lord who said, "**All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**" The Lord Jesus, as the Sovereign One, gave the disciples the authority to go out and bring men into a relationship with Him. These plain men believed Christ could use them in accomplishing the Great Commission and they conquered the known civilized world for Christ. The Bible records that within a few short weeks they saw thousands respond to Christ. Within 35 years they had planted churches in every major center in the Roman Empire.

NOTE: From these verses several conclusions may be drawn:

(1) God is not preoccupied with numbers and in His program numbers are totally inconsequential, for success in God's eyes is based on those who are in relationship with Him; therefore, size has nothing to do with success. Elijah stood up to the whole nation of Israel. Jonah was sent to evangelize the whole city of Nineveh. Paul and Barnabas were sent into pagan Asia Minor to preach the gospel. The Lord Jesus spent three and one-half years preaching to the masses and had only eleven men who were trained to carry on His work. Probably at His ascension there were no more than 150 true believers. God is not so concerned about the quantity of men but about the quality of their lives. NOTE: God's emphasis is that the living Christ indwells some men and these men are growing and maturing in Christ, having a desire to win their friends to Christ. God's method is men who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, not programs and senseless religious activity. NOTE: When Christ chose these disciples, they had little to offer the world, but He saw the great potential in them. He viewed them not in terms of what they were but what they would become as He spent time with them.

C. The Mandate

1. There is just one command, "Teach all nations," but literally this means make disciples of all nations. The idea is to make disciples, not fans or friends for Jesus,

not to push for a large following because Jesus Himself said there will never be many who will truly follow Him (Matt. 7:13, 14).

To follow involves a cross, and a cross means cutting off our own goals and purposes, the things for which we live, and settling once for all the issue in our life that Jesus Christ is going to be Lord, and we're going to serve Him. There will never be many who will make that kind of decision. The Lord always drew the lines hard and fast and he said there would be very few who would step over. And when they did, he would hit them immediately with his claim as Lord, "Are you willing to follow me, and yield everything" (David Roper)

2. The Great Commission is not just to go out and get people to make superficial decisions for Christ, or just to talk to people about Christ. It is to make disciples, which involves training every person who professes Christ until he can independently depend on the Lord.

D. The Method

1. Disciples Are to Be Made by Going. Disciples are to go to make more disciples. The Lord said that all nations were to be discipled, so this means that God will call some to be foreign missionaries. Most disciples, however, will be called to minister in the land of their birth. Those who are called to stay home must reach out from their churches to declare the gospel and make disciples. A disciple's task, whether a housewife or a businessman, is to make disciples. This makes our secular jobs exciting, for we realize that these are only means to our real task of making disciples.
2. Disciples Are to Be Made by Baptizing. These Christian-Jews clearly understood the meaning of baptism. It was a symbol of repentance in which one removed himself from the mass of Judaism and publicly identified himself with Messiah. Baptism was for true believers or disciples, and it meant that one was willing to bear a cross for Christ. Water baptism has much more meaning in other countries than in America. A person's profession of faith in Christ is taken very lightly until that person offers himself for public baptism to show that he has broken with his old life and determined to follow Christ.
3. Disciples Are to Be Made by Teaching. A disciple is made when he is instructed in "**all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**" True disciples are to stay with new disciples until they learn to walk. Disciples are to be taught the whole counsel of God and this takes time. NOTE: Since disciples are to be taught, they must be willing to learn and this takes time and hard work.

E. The Motivation

1. The motivation for carrying out the Great Commission is the

promise that the Lord Jesus is with every Christian.
Humanly speaking, the discipling of all nations is an
impossible task, but with Christ nothing is impossible.

2. Christ will be with His people unto the end of the age. The
Great Commission will go on until the second advent. John
Wesley said,

Give me one hundred men who love God and hate
sin and we will turn the world upside-down for
Christ.