

**MARKS OF A DISCIPLE:
DISCIPLESHIP DEFINED
5/24/15**

Bill Hull asks: "Does the gospel we preach produce disciples or does it produce consumers of religious good and services?" He goes on to say, "The American gospel teaches that faith equals agreement with a set of religious facts. Believing in Jesus has no meaning if we don't follow him in discipleship. Believing without discipleship isn't believing, it's agreeing to a set of facts about a religious figure."

In the American Christian scene, we have created a "non-discipleship Christianity." From the beginning of Jesus arrival, this is not what He taught.

Matthew 4:17-20 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.¹⁹ And he said to them, "**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**"²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

When these fishermen heard this invitation, they had no idea what was going to happen in their lives. Everything was changing. They would stir a nation, stand before kings, billions of people would be changed in history because they were dropping their nets and following Jesus somewhere they had never been.

The King arrived. With His arrival the God of the Bible had finally arrived. Unlike the past, He wasn't coming in a prophetic announcement, it wasn't just a message in the written Word (as important as that is!). This wasn't a dream or vision. The King came in human flesh. Where the King stands, there His rule is experienced. Jesus pushed men to stop seeing His rule as a matter of theological debates. He was walking in Jewish sandals and He immediately began transforming lives.

Something many Christians miss here. They don't see the connection between discipleship and the Kingdom of God. But it is clearly present. This is why Jesus links the two. Because the King is here (Kingdom of God), the natural results that follow are:

- Come by faith to Savior King Jesus and be saved from your sins
- Begin the life-long journey of learning who He is. He doesn't want to just save you from the guilt and condemnation of sin. He doesn't want you to think of just "following", He wants to change you into something you never imagined possible.

- Discipleship is normal Christianity. In fact, I want to demonstrate that anything else is sub-standard Christianity.

From Jesus's words uttered in the conclusion of His earthly ministry in Matt 28:18-20 to the last letter Paul wrote before martyrdom, a world of things had changed spiritually. Disciplemaking had exploded. 120 believers gathered (Ac 1) to over 25,000 by Acts 6. What happened? ***Disciples were made. That's what happened!***

So...What is a disciple?... The only thing I know to do is to begin with Jesus and the Book of Acts (only inspired document of church history)...

A DISCIPLE IS DEFINED BY JESUS HIMSELF

JESUS DEFINES A DISCIPLE BY HIS PROCESS

Since Jesus is King in His Kingdom, naturally submission and following was the outlook of the early Christians. We aren't saved just to get "fire insurance", we are saved from our sins and His just wrath against our sins in order to be transformed by His Rule. What has begun in time will be completed in eternity.

It's impossible to be a disciple or a follower of someone and not end up like that person. Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6: 40). That's the whole point of being a disciple of Jesus: we imitate Him, carry on His ministry, and become like Him in the process. (Chan, Francis; Beuving, Mark (2012-11-01).

Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples)

If the Big Picture Purpose of the Christian life is...

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Disciple as a word is used 230 times in the Gospels, 30 times in Acts. So it must be important. This places in perspective the Great Commission "Go therefore and make disciples"...

A disciple (mathetes) is not taken from the model of the **classroom** (Greek culture) but rather it comes from the model of an apprentice or mentor. **Discipleship is a way of life, a disciple is an intern, an apprentice who is a "learner learning."** Unfortunately,

we have developed a “classroom” approach to discipling. This wasn’t how the rabbis of Jesus day did it, and it wasn’t how Jesus disciplined men.

There certainly existed a “teacher-pupil” relationship. Progress through growth as a disciple didn’t happen in a classroom setting. It happened in real life. It was in multiple settings, with real people and needs that Jesus made followers out of His disciples. Through growing relationships people were apprenticed and they wanted to grow and change to be like their Lord.

This involves “The intentional training of disciples with accountability on the basis of loving relationships.”

Then this process of such change begins right here with Jesus.

- Building Relationships (love, trust, time)
- Changing what the disciple believes (knowledge, understanding)
- Values begin to change when people think differently
- Priorities change (what is important to the disciple)
- Behaviors change
- Habits are being formed
- Character is now developing

Jesus disciplined men addressing each of these areas.

How Jesus made a disciple began with a simple first encounter. They saw Jesus in John 1 and said “Lord, where are you staying?” Beginning with that first encounter, they went through four stages of discipling with Jesus. These **phases are the beginning of commitment.** The levels of commitment must be increased only through these four stages. If a person is rushed too quickly, he may be defeated or simply leave.

Phase One: “Come and See”

"The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus." ³⁸ "Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "**where are you staying?**"" ³⁹ "He said to them, "**Come and you will see.**" So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." (John 1:37-39)

The phase ended approximately four to six months later in Jn 4.

The characteristics are notable. Jesus makes no strong demands upon them. He ministers, creates interest, he “gathered them around Himself and cared for them as

He exposed them to God's power and message. . . . At the close of this four-month introductory period, He turned their eyes towards the harvest (John 4:35) and then sent them back home to fish" This is the phase in which Jesus will "Tell them what" and "tell them why".

Phase Two: "Come and Follow Me"

"Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen." ¹⁷ "And Jesus said to them, **Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.**" (Mark 1:16-17)

Here Jesus will "show them how" and "do ministry with them" over a ten month period of time. After a period of reflection over their exposure to Jesus and his Mission, they were now ready for more significant commitment. Jesus begins this phase with an invitation to fish for men. "When the Lord chose these men to come and follow Him, He demonstrated His interest in training them".

Jesus still did not send them out. They ministered with Him but did not leave his presence. Their leadership calling and skills were being developed in preparation for the next phase.

Phase Three: "Come and Be with Me"

"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him." ¹⁴ "And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so **that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach**" (Mark 3:13-14)

Here Jesus will "let them do ministry" during a twenty month period of time. Jesus "chose the twelve and gave them special responsibility and authority" (Matthew 9:37-10:1). He planned to pass his work on to them and prepared them for their new responsibility".

Jesus "sent the disciples out in twos. Jesus spent His time demonstrating, explaining, experimenting, and clarifying what was on His heart". Jesus multiplied his ministry through this process and the disciples are prepared to enter the next phase. "Jesus' teaching strategy was to let them do ministry and then deploy them into their own ministry

Phase Four: "Remain in Me"

Abide [remain] in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." (John 15:4)

Here Jesus "lets them do ministry" in a phase that extends through the rest of their lives. This is "The Great Commission" of Mt 28:18-20 happening through disciples.

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit," 20 "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

In Jn 13-17, John “. . . records Jesus’ last days and final instructions before His disciples are released to minister. . . . These trained men are now deployed to fulfill their calling”.

This survey demonstrates the importance of “defining the process of discipling”. Everyone is different. We all respond to Jesus in different ways, at different stages of our spiritual life. I heard the gospel early. Made a profession of faith at eight years old. But I also spent 3 years rebelling against Him. It wasn’t until my Senior year in High School that He broke me spiritually and I gave me life to him in submission. Major turning point.

The early disciples had those moments. Even Thomas had doubts after the resurrection. So see this as a process. Moments of rapid changes, other stretches of very slow, sometimes indiscernible changes.

The process does not end during our lives. This process involves bringing people to faith in Christ (phase one) and exposing them to ministry to create interest that will take them to the next level.

ACTS DEFINES A DISCIPLE BY CHURCH HISTORY

Acts 1:1-2 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer grasped what I am sharing here from Acts. He was the man who resisted Adolf Hitler, was hung for this crime, spent his life seeking to bring vibrant Christianity back to a dead German Church:

Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

The modern church hasn’t grasped this fact. This is exactly why the American church has lost the culture. In fact, it is the culture that has formed us, rather than us forming the society. Today we have “**non-discipleship Christianity, consumer religion (what can I get out of Christianity)**”. Prosperity Gospel emphases has replaced Jesus and discipling with a self-centered motivation for coming to Christ. **The Bible presents a radically different picture: BEING A DISCIPLE IS NORMAL CHRISTIANITY.**

This is very clear in the Book of Acts. You see it in Luke’s vocabulary. When Luke chooses words to describe the church it becomes clear how they viewed

themselves. Though Acts uses several words, there is one that stands out above all the others. He uses the words "church", "Christian", "believer", and "disciple" but his preferred term is "disciple." Though all these words are viewed as synonyms describing one and the same person(s). Observe how Dr. Luke refers to the church and individual believers (**using disciple 30 times**):

- "In those days Peter stood up among the **brothers** (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said," (Acts 1:15)
- "Now in these days when the **disciples** were increasing in number...twelve summoned the full number of the **disciples** (Acts 6:1-7)
- "But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the **disciples** of the Lord, went to the high priest""And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the **disciples**. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple." ²⁷ ... "Since Lydda was near Joppa, the **disciples**, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay."" (Acts 9:1, 26-38)
- "and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the **disciples** were first called **Christians**." ...²⁹ "So the **disciples** determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea." (Acts 11:26-29)
- "And the **disciples** were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 13:52)
- "But when the **disciples** gathered about him, he went on with Barnabas to Derbe." ²¹ "When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many **disciples**, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch," ²² "strengthening the souls of the **disciples**, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the **Kingdom** of God..." ²⁷ "And when they arrived and gathered the **church** together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." ²⁸ "And they remained no little time with the **disciples**." (Acts 14:20-28)
- "Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the **disciples** that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10)
- "After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the **disciples**." ...²⁷ "And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the **brothers** encouraged him and wrote to the **disciples** to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed," (Acts 18:23-27)
- "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some **disciples**." ²... ⁸ "And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the **Kingdom** of God." ⁹ "But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the **disciples** with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus." (Acts 19:1-9)

- "But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the **disciples** would not let him." (Acts 19:30)
- "After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the **disciples**, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia." (Acts 20:1)... "and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the **disciples** after them." (Acts 20:30)
- "And having sought out the **disciples**, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem."⁵...¹⁶ "And some of the **disciples** from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge." (Acts 21:4-16)

The word "**brothers**" was used first in Acts. However, that is not the common word used in Acts (. Even the name "Christians" was not the most widely used name, it was a term given to us by the world.

It was the word "disciple" that most commonly designated who we are as believers. "Disciples" becomes our identity. As we saw earlier, other biblical words are used such as believers, or sons and daughters; however, when it comes to our mission we are called disciples. **So the word "disciple" reveals normal Christianity.** Discipleship isn't for just a few highly-committed believers. It was the call of the average believer. The modern church has treated discipleship as something additional to Christianity. Yet, for the early church it was foundational. This is why we have many who profess Christ without depth, it is why the church is spiritually weak.

THE PRODUCT AND PROCESS EXPLODED THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: PENTECOST

Believers who were about following the Lord Jesus Christ through the exercise of the Gifts

1. Supernatural impact of the Spirit: Loved God with Passion
2. Loved One another in the Church
3. Loved their neighbors outside the Church
4. Gave their lives gladly to Christ in word and deed

You must be deliberate, intentional in defining a disciple. You should design the programs of your church to produce disciples. Those disciple should go out and multiply that in the lives of many others.

You must be discipled: You cannot give them what you don't have...

**Creating a Church Culture of the Body Exercising their Gifts
and applying what the Spirit has bestowed on the Church**

One on one, one another in small groups, ministering to each other and to the world TOGETHER! It is the Spirit who has given His gifts to the body is carrying forward the Great Commission of making disciples. Would we separate out the gifts and think the Spirit isn't doing the Great Commission. Discipleship has opened up to an even greater dynamic in the book of Acts. This is really very simple. Daily giving your life to Jesus and being available to Him with each new day...I have witnessed these 4 Phases for years...Several examples...

Sarah McCall & Karen Gower

Broken, immoral young woman. Struggling, had been through several abortions. Became a Christian, family in our church took her into their home. One day Sarah was working in the garden with Karen and asked her "Karen, would you like me to disciple you?" She said "yes." Sarah began to meet with her and spend time walking through God's Word, study...but main thing was friendship and time together. Karen was involved with teens in Young Life. She was a delightful young women in her 20's.

One day Karen told Sarah about a concern, turned out to be cancer. One year later she died. My last meetings with her. Living skeleton, I wept and said "Your life has been significant, you have had impact in the lives of many." She said, "Thanks, I needed to know that." When I did her funeral, the place was wall to wall with teens who had been impacted by her testimony, life and ministry. That is discipleship. Not a program, but helping people to move into next stage of following Jesus. Multiplication happened as people evangelize and disciple people.

There are Karen's around you! Everyday. May be in church. Not yet in church. How do you spell love? TIME.

High School Students who stood on the stage a few weeks back

Discipleship by taking believers along in challenging situations. Life lived in ministry opportunities, not just a classroom. Going to other places and sharing Christ. Whether it is talking to Mormons in Utah, local events here in Knoxville, a camp and town in NC, Africa – doesn't matter. It isn't just the location, it is doing ministry together. Building on relationships in challenging situations for sharing the Gospel.

It is the same for the things Seth is doing among us. The list goes on. Kentucky with Ginger. It is moving people into ministry as the body engages gifts and works together. This is how Jesus produced a follower who follows.