

From Apprentices to Disciples

Discover why discipleship is more than just apprenticeship and how it holds the key to a fulfilling life in Christ.

Introduction

In today's society, the concept of apprenticeship is well-known. Apprentices learn a trade, master the techniques, and eventually acquire the same skill level as their masters. However, when it comes to a life in Christ, something deeper and more transformative is needed; discipleship. Matthew 28:19 states:

Matthew 28:19

(19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Jesus didn't call us to make apprentices; He called us to make disciples. This subtle yet profound difference holds the key to expanding the Kingdom of God through multiplication rather than mere addition.

The Foundation of Discipleship

Discipleship, at its core, involves learning from the Master, Jesus Christ. Unlike apprentices who might only mimic the skills of their masters, disciples immerse themselves in the teachings, character, and mission of Jesus. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus says:

Matthew 11:29

(29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

This invitation goes beyond superficial learning; it calls for a deep, life-transforming relationship.

The relationship between Jesus and His disciples is a perfect example of this deeper learning. They didn't just learn how to preach or heal; they learned to embody the grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness of Jesus. In Luke 6:40, Jesus said:

Luke 6:40

(40) The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

Jesus didn't just perform miracles and teach parables; He lived out His teachings in every interaction and situation. This approach to learning means that discipleship encompasses all aspects of life; our thoughts, actions, relationships, and purpose.

The aim of discipleship is not just to do what Jesus did but to become like Jesus in every aspect of our lives. This process involves a continuous transformation of the heart and mind, aligning ourselves more closely with the character and will of Christ. We are to be his hands and feet and serve others just as Jesus did.



The Multiplication Effect

One of the key distinctions of discipleship is its multiplicative nature. Apprenticeship often stops at replication—creating a copy of the master. Discipleship, however, is about creating more disciples who, in turn, create even more disciples. This multiplication effect is crucial for the growth of the Kingdom of God. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:2

(2) And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

This principle of multiplication was central to Jesus' ministry and is brilliantly explained in the book "The Master's Plan to Evangelism" by Robert E. Coleman. Jesus invested deeply in a few so that they could reach many. His method was not mass evangelism but focused discipleship. He poured His life into His twelve disciples, who then went on to disciple others, spreading the Gospel exponentially. This approach ensures the sustainability and growth of the Church.

The early church provides a powerful example of this multiplication effect. After Jesus' ascension, the apostles took His Great Commission seriously. They didn't just gather followers; they trained leaders who would, in turn, train others. Acts 2:41-47 describes how the early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread, and to prayer. This dedication resulted in daily growth as more people were drawn to the message of Christ through the transformed lives of His disciples.

The Importance of Obedience and Love

Discipleship requires a commitment to living a life of obedience to Christ. This is more than just following rules; it is about aligning our lives with the will of God. Jesus emphasized this in John 14:15, which says:

John 14:15

(15) "If you love me, keep my commands."

Obedience to Christ is a testament to our love for Him and our commitment to His teachings. It is through obedience that we truly become His disciples. John 8:31 says:

John 8:31

(31) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."

True discipleship exists in actions that reflect the teachings of Jesus. This includes loving our neighbors, forgiving those who wrong us, and serving those in need. James 1:22 reminds us:

James 1:22

(22) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

This practical application of faith is essential for authentic discipleship. It is not enough to simply hear or even teach the word; we must live it out in our daily lives, being an example of the life-changing power of Christ in our actions.



Love is the distinguishing mark of a disciple. Jesus said in John 13:35:

John 13:35

(35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

This love goes beyond superficial kindness; it is a self-sacrificial love that mirrors Christ's love for us. It is this kind of love that attracts others to the faith and fosters a community of believers who support and uplift each other.

Discipleship also involves building and nurturing loving communities. In such communities, believers grow together, hold each other accountable, and support one another spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This aspect of discipleship is essential for personal growth and the collective strength of the Church. Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages us:

Hebrews 10:24-25

(24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, (25) not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Conclusion

Discipleship is more than just apprenticeship. It is a transformative journey that not only molds us into the likeness of Christ but also empowers us to multiply His impact by making more disciples. Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" is a call to a deeper, more committed, and more expansive form of following Him. As we embrace true discipleship, we participate in the divine plan of expanding God's Kingdom through multiplication rather than mere addition. Let us commit ourselves to being true disciples and creating disciples, fulfilling the Great Commission, and living out the love and obedience that Jesus exemplified.

In a society that often values mere replication, let us remember that Christ calls us to a higher purpose. Let us be disciples who make disciples, transforming lives and expanding the Kingdom of God one person at a time. By focusing on deep, relational discipleship, we can foster a faith that not only survives but thrives, reaching more people with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

