

DISCIPLESHIP

Lesson 1

The Biblical Pattern Of Discipleship

“A thousand sets of eyes watching you preach for 45 minutes every Sunday morning is not discipleship.”

“Go then and make disciples of all nations . . .” Matthew 28:19 BBE

Discipleship does not take place from the pulpit. Real biblical discipleship requires the discipler to get his or her hands dirty. We are all called to make disciples. I pastor our church, but I personally only disciple about 25 people on a regular basis (and four of those are my wife and children). Pastoring is all about governing, teaching/preaching, and feeding a congregation. Discipleship is a lot more personal than that. Below are some biblical facts about biblical discipleship:

- There is a difference between preaching and discipleship.
- Preaching and teaching will feed and exhort people to action, but discipleship will actually show them what that action should look like.
- Being a disciple means you have a personal teacher investing in you.
- Discipleship is done in private away from the multitudes (**Matthew 13:10; 24:3; Mark 4:34; 7:17; 10:10**).
- The disciple is not above their master (*didáskalos*—teacher) (**Matthew 10:24**).
- Disciples want to be like their master (**Matthew 10:25**).
- There is a difference between disciples and multitudes:
 - **Then spake Jesus to the multitudes, and to his disciples . . .**
Matthew 23:1
 - **And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, . . .**
Mark 10:46
 - **And he [Jesus] came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem,**
Luke 6:17
 - **And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.**
Luke 7:11
 - **For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.**
Luke 9:14
- Over and over again, the Gospels refer to the disciples as “**his disciples**.” Jesus never claimed the multitudes as His (see the numerous verses below). The multitudes

are generally unsubmitted vagabonds, though they can be found in the presence of God during a church service.

- Jesus had to teach everyone how to be His disciple (**Luke 14:25-27; John 8:31, 13:35, 15:8**). Even then, very few were actually interested.
- Disciples turn to their master in time of trouble (**Matthew 8:25**). In this verse, they were in the boat with Jesus and were still struggling.
- Real disciples become like extended family (**Matthew 12:49**).
- Disciples take on the flavor, the style, the vision, the wisdom, the doctrine, and the success of their discipler!
- After 3.5 years of ministry, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, possessing the Spirit without measure, succeeded in making only 120 disciples (**Acts 1:15**). That's it! Only 13 of those disciples (the 11 plus Matthias and Justus) had been faithful to Jesus the entire 3.5 years.

Convert—Disciple—Epistle

- **Convert**—a baby Christian; a newly converted one. Someone who has recently given their life to Christ.
- **Disciple**—a convert who is being trained, disciplined, instructed, and counseled in the doctrines of Jesus Christ. They have a mentor/discipler actively investing in their life. Also known as a little child or a young man in the faith.
- **Epistle**—a mature saint. Someone whose life reads like a New Testament epistle. Someone whose life you can follow. Can also be called a father or mother in the faith.

THE LORD'S PATTERN OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus Christ did not disciple every person He preached to. The Bible demonstrates that there were two categories of people surrounding the Lord's ministry: multitudes and disciples. Both groups acted differently, therefore He treated each group differently.

- **And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:** **Matthew 5:1**

Disciples are always much closer to the instructor than the multitudes are. The multitudes are happy keeping their distance. They fear that getting too close might cause them to be pulled upon and their life to be inconvenienced.

- **And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.** **Matthew 14:22**

Disciples go before their instructor to help with the next assignment. Multitudes go home.

- **Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days . . .** **Matthew 15:32**

Disciples will come when they are called—called to church, called to service, called to work details, called to outreaches, called to prayer meetings, etc. Multitudes come to hear and be healed (they come to receive, not really to give).

- **But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.
Matthew 9:36**

Jesus viewed the multitudes as shepherdless, yet they were still in His meetings. Today, countless multitudes are in gospel meetings, in the presence of God, yet still have no shepherd. These saints will always be susceptible to spiritual fainting and dispersion.

- **And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. ¹⁶And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?
Mark 9:14, 16**

Jesus “went to bat” for His disciples. He stood up for them against the religious bullies and finished the work they couldn’t accomplish.

- **In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all,
Luke 12:1**

Jesus always addresses His disciples first. The multitudes always seem to be the last to know or the last to hear.

THE LORD’S DISCIPLES

Jesus did not disciple everyone who came to Him, but He did give very strict requirements for those who claimed they wanted what He had:

- Hate your family and your own life (**Luke 14:26**).
- Take up your cross (die to self) pursue Him (**Luke 14:27**).
- Forsake all that you have (even ministry callings) (**Luke 14:33**).

The Lord’s discipleship ranks were very reminiscent of David’s Mighty Men of Valor.

Jesus Christ	King David
Multitudes	The Six Hundred
The Seventy	The Four Hundred
The Twelve	The Mighty Men of Valor (37 Men)
Peter, James, and John	The Three (Adino, Eleazar, Shammah)
John the Beloved	Joab the Captain

There will always be a hierarchy present in discipleship because not every Christian is equally hungry or committed.

- The Lord's disciples did more than just listen while He taught:
 - They asked Him deeper questions in private.
 - They prayed with Him.
 - They served Him.
 - They fetched transportation for Him (donkeys and boats).
 - They fetched food and prepared meals for Him.
 - They went before Him to set up the next meetings.

MODERN APPLICATION

The following points are wisdom for modern believers and observations taken from the pattern of discipleship practiced by the Lord Jesus:

1. 95% of discipleship takes place beyond the sermon, in private, with one-on-one time.
2. True discipleship requires trust, humility, hunger, and a desire to be different from what you already are. There can be no defense of your current condition.
3. True discipleship is inconvenient and costly.
4. Discipleship involves more than just informational learning. It involves instruction, correction, rebuke, adjustment, assignment, reinspection, and more correction until a lasting change has been made.
5. True discipleship will result in a changed flavor, a changed style, a changed attitude, a changed mindset, and a changed person.
6. A husband's best disciples should be his wife and children. A mother's best disciples should be her children. Don't win the world and lose your family.
7. Wives should look to their husband and/or a **Titus 2** woman for discipleship.
8. Generally speaking, and for propriety's sake, men should disciple men and women should disciple women. As a pastor, I disciple men and I expect that influence to trickle down through the rank and file of their homes. I have only disciplined women if they were under my direct leadership at the church, otherwise I would be usurping their husband's or father's authority.
9. When you disciple a person, you will only be able to bring them up as high as you are in the Kingdom; therefore, though we are all called to make disciples, not every Christian is qualified to disciple.
10. You can never view your discipler as your equal. This will breed the sin of familiarity and contempt.
11. Being old neither qualifies you to be a discipler nor does it exempt you from discipleship. Maturity levels and fruit production are the Kingdom's metrics.
12. God only promotes true disciples. He does not promote the peripheral multitudes.

We must aspire to both *be* disciples and to *make* disciples. The Kingdom is advanced by self-replication. As it has been stated: Be one (a disciple). Make one (a disciple). Send one (a disciple). And never forget that it was Judas Iscariot, one of the Lord's best disciples, who betrayed Him.

DISCIPLESHIP

Lesson 2

Modern Discipleship

We have established that true biblical discipleship is not merely sitting in a pew on Sunday morning, listening to the sermon, and taking notes. All this exercise has done is communicate knowledge to those hungry enough to pay attention and take notes.

“Disciple” (*mathētēs*) appears 269 times in the New Testament, the term meaning: *a learner, a pupil, a disciple*. The abundant usage of *mathētēs* readily indicates to us how important this concept is for the New Testament believer.

THE HISTORY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Throughout ancient Greek history, disciples (*mathētēs*) and teachers/masters (*didáskolos*) were a unit. One could not exist without the other. The biblical teacher-disciple unit is modeled after the same pattern and involves far more than the traditional classroom student experience. It is a relationship where not just knowledge is communicated, but also where tradition, behavior, culture, and values are transmitted. In short, true discipleship will automatically build a close relationship between the disciple and the teacher.

According to ancient Greek culture, to call oneself a disciple is to declare a “direct dependence of the one under instruction upon an authority superior in knowledge.” Ancient papyri have also indicated that *mathētēs* (disciple) was the equivalent of our modern term *apprentice*.

The concept of disciples and teachers is not present in the Old Testament because God revealed Himself to be the Lawgiver (**Exodus 20; Isaiah 33:22**). Not even Moses or the prophets were considered to be *didáskolos*, or masters (the term is absent from the Septuagint, as is the Hebrew equivalent); they were simply mouthpieces. This changed after the Babylonian Captivity when it became very necessary for the Jews to know the Law of God. Those who gave themselves wholeheartedly to the study of the Law, the Torah, and the ancient traditions were called rabbis; those who studied under them were called *talmidh*, or disciples. The *talmidh* devoted himself to his rabbi not only to learn but also to serve.

Discipleship was not just learning. It was also following and imitating. The imitation was no mere impersonation or mimicry; it was an imitation coming from a changed heart. True discipleship reproduces itself, the result being that true disciples imitate their discipler’s doctrine, behavior, lifestyle, and even suffering.

DISCIPLES! DISCIPLES! EVERYWHERE!

Every human being has been discipled by someone at some point in their life—whether it be a sports coach, or a vocal coach, or a martial arts instructor. We all live out a mimicry of what we’ve learned somewhere in our past. We are the totality of the discipleship that has taken place in our life. In the times of Christ, everybody was eager to be discipled:

- The Pharisees had disciples (**Matthew 22:6; Mark 2:18**).
 - The considered themselves the disciples of Moses (**John 9:28**).

- John the Baptist had disciples (**Matthew 11:2; Mark 2:18, 6:29; Luke 11:1; John 3:25**)
- Jesus had His disciples of 12, then 70, and finally 120 at Pentecost.
- Corinth had factitious infighting over who was better based upon their discipleship pedigree: “I’m of Paul” or “I’m of Apollos” (**1 Corinthians 3:4**).
- It is abundantly evident that Paul had numerous disciples: Silas, Timothy, Titus, Erastus, Epaphroditus, John Mark, and Aquila and Priscilla to name a few.
- Aquila and Priscilla discipled Apollos (**Acts 18:24-26**).
- Now every Christian is called to make a disciple (**Matthew 28:19-20**). Who can you say you have discipled?
- Right now, someone is discipling your children. Is it you, their friends, or media?

NECESSARY DISCIPLESHIP ATTITUDES

As with most things in life, discipleship is all about attitude. Without the proper attitude, no amount of training or knowledge will bring about a disciplined change. Below are good discipleship attitudes.

1. **Heart**—First of all, you must have a heart for discipleship. That heart has one simple mantra: *I want what they have!* You don’t have to understand everything, you just have to want better than what you already have. As Peter said, “Where else will we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.” Peter didn’t understand everything, but he did understand that Jesus of Nazareth could help him.
2. **Hunger for change**—If you’re happy being the same, you will never seek out change. Hunger for change may be the most necessary attitude. Hunger will allow you to endure the harder aspects of discipleship like correction, rebuke, and inconvenience.
3. **Humility**—It takes humility to let your life be realigned to someone else’s. By submitting to a discipler, you allow them to become a template that your life gets cut out to fit. They become your pattern. (Disciplers are not *the* standard. Jesus is *the* standard, but disciplers *are* living reflections of the standard.)
4. **Trust**—You must trust the person you are submitting to—their knowledge, their ethics, their character, and their track record.
5. **Contempt for excuses**—Excuses short-circuit discipleship. The Bible reminds us that the blessing is in doing the Word, not excusing ourselves from it.

DISCIPLESHIP—STAGED, MULTI-MENTORED, AND SEASONAL

Discipleship is not meant to be every day for the rest of your life. If that were the case, how could the Lord expect Christians to make disciples? It is evident from the Great Commission that at some point Christians are expected to graduate beyond needing regular hands-on training and move on to helping others in the same process. Consider these biblical facts:

- **Staged**—Jesus only discipled the 12 disciples for 3.5 years. The 70 and the 120 were discipled for less time than that. The 12 disciples became the Twelve Apostles and were promoted to leading the early church in Acts 1. Once promoted to Apostleship, they began making their own disciples and administrating the early church.
- **Multi-Mentored**—Paul was mentored by Ananias in Syria, Peter, James the Lord’s brother, and Barnabas. He was further trained by the elders at the Antioch church.

He was promoted to early ministry with Barnabas approximately 15 years after his conversion. He did not lead his own ministry for another 2 or 3 years, at which time he took Silas and led his own missionary work (**Acts 15:40-41**).

- **Multi-Mentored/Staged**—Timothy was probably converted to Christianity under Paul's ministry during his extensive work in Lystra and Derbe (**Acts 14:6-23**). By the time Paul returned to Lystra and Derbe (**Acts 16:1**), Timothy was being promoted and commended by the brethren, having evidently been disciplined by someone at the church. Paul took young Timothy under his wing and continued training him for ministry.
- **Seasonal**—After a certain season of ministry discipleship, Timothy was ready to be set in as a pastor. Paul ordained Timothy as the pastor of Ephesus and left him there to run things. After an unknown time, Timothy hit a rough spot and needed more help. This new season of discipleship came in the form of the epistle of **1 Timothy**. Titus experienced the same pattern: disciplined by Paul, installed as a pastor, then sent an epistle.

MODERN APPLICATIONS

Discipleship is designed to take you from convert to stable Christian in a short time. Its aim is to instill basic doctrine, Kingdom culture, work ethic, biblical morality, and a servant's heart. The biblical precedent indicates that it is possible to go from pagan to fledgling minister in 3 to 3.5 years. The **first stage** of discipleship will require:

- A heart that looks up to someone God has placed in your life, e.g. a spiritual mother, a mentor, etc.
- A regular Bible study (in addition to faithful church attendance).
- Service in the ministry of helps. Some things can only be learned by doing. Not all discipleship is classroom learning.

After you've matured and are a stable, dependable, knowledgeable Christian, you may only require a seasonal discipleship as new situations, battles, or callings arise. This is **seasonal discipleship**. Examples:

- Courtship, engagement, and marriage require a new season of discipleship frequently called pre-marital counseling.
- Starting a business, starting a church, or moving to become a missionary would also require another season of intense discipleship.
- Terminal diseases, death of a loved one, or divorce would require discipleship.
- Any major life transition (e.g., retirement, having a first child, buying a first home, becoming an empty nester) would all benefit from some form of discipleship.

There may arise a time when you need training in a precise area for which your current discipler is ill-equipped, at which time it might be necessary to get wisdom and training from someone else. Multiple mentors would be totally appropriate in scenarios such as:

- Praise and worship training
- Financial training
- Children's ministry training



- Evangelistic training
- Missions training
- Etc.

The two most critical keys to being discipled are observing and asking LOTS of questions. May God help us to both be a disciple and to make disciples.

DISCIPLESHIP

Lesson 3

Evidences Of Discipleship

Jesus Christ declared that we would be known by our fruit. This means that concerning discipleship there should be fruit, or evidence, that we are being, or have been, discipled. The purpose of this lesson is to explore biblical signs and evidences of discipleship. Remember, it is possible to faithfully attend a local church and never be a real disciple of Jesus Christ.

REPUTATION

It has been observed that we can never lose our reputation; we only change it. Because, truth be told, we will always have a reputation of some sort. When a Christian has truly submitted to the discipleship process, it will define his or her life and cause others to take note.

- **But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. 2 Kings 3:11**

Though the teacher/disciple relationship is not overtly discussed in the Old Testament, patterns of such submission and learnership are evident throughout. Here, the new prophet on the scene is Elisha, yet his reputation was not one of mighty prophet (yet). It was that of "servant to Elijah." In essence, his reputation was based upon *whom* he had served and trained under and not on *what* he could do. This introduces us to the concept of spiritual pedigree. You will be known for who trained you. Who can you say has trained or discipled you? Is their influence upon you evident?

- It would have been an honor to be able to say you served a Billy Graham or a Lester Sumrall for 35 years. No doubt their hand would have left an imprint on your life.
- In the martial arts, it is very honorable to meet people who trained directly under Bruce Lee, Jigoro Kano, or any of the Gracies.

From 1996-2007, I faithfully attended church, serving five different pastors. After 11 years of consistent promotion, I was finally promoted into fulltime ministry. Besides those five pastors, God placed me under Dr. Barclay as my pastor for 17 years and the late Pastor Stephen Okwokwo as a father and mentor. I currently have several other older fathers (and a few mothers) in the faith as well. I am constantly trying to honor them and serve them. They are my mentors. I hope to always have some spiritual role model in my life.

What my mentors have taught me:

- *All of my fathers and mentors speak (or did speak) of their lineage of faith. None of them were fatherless. Their testimony and success were tied to the training and discipleship of their pastors and mentors. I have always desired to have the same testimony.*
- *Pastor Vaughn had Pastor Bill McCrae and Rhema Bible Training Center.*

- *Pastor Darren also had Pastor Bill McCrae, Rhema, Christ for the Nations Institute, and Dr. Gerald Brooks.*
- *Pastor Trey had Pastor Darren and Dr. Ed King.*
- *Rev. Lucy Sheets had Dr. Lester Sumrall.*
- *Pastor Okwokwo had Brother Cole.*
- *All of these ministers have/had a reputation for being submitted and teachable.*
- *The only ones that failed are those that left their discipler/mentor/pastor.*

HEART/VISION

When a Christian has been discipled, part of their mentor's heart is transferred and their vision is caught. Discipleship does not just communicate knowledge, it transfers heart. Catching a mentor's heart is typically much more critical than learning their knowledge.

- **But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. ²⁰For I have no man likeminded (*isópsychos*), who will naturally care for your state. ²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. ²²But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.**
Philippians 2:19-22

Paul had numerous disciples: Titus, Erastus, Apollos, John Mark, Silas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Aquila and Priscilla, but according to Paul's own confession no one was as close or as trustworthy as Timothy. Timothy had caught Paul's mind. They were *isópsychos*—equal in soul. Timothy's mind, will, and emotions had come up to the level of Paul's. He was now a carbon-copy of Paul. Consequently, Paul promoted and used Timothy more than any of his other disciples. Have you caught your discipler's heart? Is their influence upon you evident?

What my mentors have taught me:

- *I am no longer just Chris McMichael. God has permitted me to become an amalgamation of all of my fathers, pastors, and heroes.*
- *There are times when I minister when I feel just like Pastor Vaughn. A few times I have felt like Dr. Lester Sumrall. I am happy to have followed them as they followed the Lord.*
- *My heart and vision for the gospel and ministry have been shaped by all of my influencers. I no longer have my own vision. I no longer have a dream of any kind.*

PERSONALITY CHANGE

One purpose of discipleship is to make you something you have not been able to accomplish on your own. This will inevitably bring about some sort of soul change. Because the aim of discipleship is to renew your mind, will, and emotions, being a real disciple will change your personality. Those that knew you pre-discipleship will undoubtedly be able to say, "Wow! You're different. You've changed. What happened to you?" This is a wonderful mark of discipleship we should embrace without fear. We all need to change somewhere in our personality. Never fight to stay the same. Fight to change.

- **Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. Acts 4:13 NASB**

The rulers, elders, and scribes could tell that Peter and John had been discipled by Jesus because of their confidence despite their lack of education and formal training. Their changed personality amazed them! Discipleship changes personalities! Are you still the same in your soul? Is there any evidence of emotional growth? Have you found the courage and confidence that only walking with Jesus Christ can achieve?

What my mentors have taught me:

- *Boldness—Pastor Vaughn was never afraid to confront sin in anybody's life, at any place, at any time.*
- *Fearlessness—Pastor Okwokwo once said, "If you would spend one week with me, you would never fear anything again." He feared nothing from anyone on any continent.*
- *Compassion/Patience—Dr. Barclay was a master of mercy and longsuffering when it came to cutting people off due to sin. He strove to maintain relationships many would avoid in hopes that he might help the wayward again one day.*

SERVITUDE

Another evidence of true biblical discipleship is the manifestation of heartfelt servitude. The sin nature does not naturally long to serve anyone but self. Servitude is a fruit of discipleship. Every epistle author opened their letters declaring themselves to be "a servant of Jesus Christ," or "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

- **But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Luke 22:26**

Serving is the only way to become great in the Kingdom. Greatness is not found in age or in lordship. It is only found in humility and laying down your life. This is not natural to the sinful ego. It must be discipled into the believer.

- **For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Galatians 5:13**

Once again, the selfishness of man would desire to take its newfound liberty and indulge itself rather than use it to serve. Discipleship trains a Christian to take their liberty and convert it into Christian service.

What my mentors have taught me:

- *Pastor Vaughn—"I don't have to make sacrifices for God; I get to make sacrifices for Him!"*
- *Pastor Okwokwo—"Brother, you must learn to pray until things change." This takes a lot of sacrifice of personal time and pleasure.*

- *Dr. Barclay—“I’m always going to be talking to somebody about ministry . . .” This thing of service never shuts off. Being a servant is a 24/7 endeavor, not a weekend outreach sign-up.*

Do you show any evidence of discipleship in your life? What is lacking? What will you do about it?