

Training Disciples to Train

Session 2: What is Discipleship? (2a)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Phillips. Published by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content below (except the study questions) is taken directly from the book without revisions. The order for each lesson is: quote the memory verse; read the whole Bible chapter of that verse; read the questions; read and discuss the content; then share personal prayer requests and each closing with a prayer for the other person's requests.

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: [Luke 9:23-24](#)
(see <https://biblicalmentoring.org/index.php/training-disciples-to-train-others/>)

*23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me,
let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
24 For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake*

Step 3: Read and discuss the Bible Chapter – [Luke 9](#)

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. What can we learn about discipleship from Socrates and Plato?
2. What are the two essential components of discipleship?
3. At what point in your Christian walk do you become a disciple?
4. Discuss how a person can never separate God's gift of salvation from being a disciple and thus a disciple-maker.

Step 5: Read and discuss the Content from the book:

Chapter 2 per the author – Keith Phillips:

During the Golden Age of Greece the young Plato could be seen strolling through the streets of Athens in pursuit of his master: the shabby, barefoot and brilliant Socrates. Here, probably, was the beginning of discipleship. Socrates wrote no books. His students listened intently to every word he spoke and watched everything he did in preparation to teach others. Apparently the system worked; Plato later founded the Academy, where philosophy and science continued to be taught for 900 years.

Jesus used a similar relationship with the men He trained in order to spread the kingdom of God. His disciples were with Him day and night for three years. They listened to His sermons and memorized His teachings. They saw Him live the life He taught. Then, after His ascension, the disciples entrusted the words of Christ to others and encouraged them to adopt His lifestyle and obey His teaching. A disciple is a student who memorizes the words, actions and lifestyle of his teacher in preparation to teach others.

Christian discipleship is a teacher-student relationship, based on the model of Christ and His disciples, in which the teacher reproduces the fullness of life he has in Christ in the student so well, that the student is able to train others to teach others.

A careful study of Christ's teaching and life reveals that discipleship has two essential components: self-death and reproduction. They keynote the entire ministry of Jesus. He died so that He could reproduce new life. And He requires each of His disciples to follow His example.

Self-Death

Christ's call to discipleship is a call to self-death, an absolute surrender to God. Jesus said, "...If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:23,24).

From the world's perspective, Christ's frankness in calling people to follow Him appears to be extreme. Today if a person wanted to "sell" such a demanding lifestyle, an all-consuming commitment, he would probably retain the most sophisticated Madison Avenue firm to meticulously describe the glorious benefits of such a decision in a full-color brochure. Or he would hire the most glamorous actress and surround her with "beautiful people" obviously enjoying the contentment and delight of their new life in Christ. Then he would catch the magic of the moment on videotape, which hopefully would be aired at halftime during "Monday Night Football."

But Jesus is honest and direct: to share in His glory a person must first share in His death.

Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings. And the Lord of the universe commands every person to follow Him. His call to Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4:18,19) and to James and John (Matthew 4:21) was a command. "Follow Me" has always been a command, never an invitation (John 1:43).

Jesus never pleaded for someone to follow Him. He was embarrassingly straightforward. He confronted the woman at the well with her adultery, Nicodemus with his intellectual pride and the Pharisees with their self-righteousness. No one can interpret "...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" as begging (Matthew 4:17). Jesus commanded each person to renounce self-seeking pursuits, abandon his sin and obey Him completely.

When the rich young ruler refused to sell all and follow Him (Matthew 19:21), Jesus did not run after him trying to negotiate a compromise. He never watered down His standard. Jesus simply said, "Whoever serves me must follow me ..." (John 12:26 NIV).

Jesus expected immediate obedience. He accepted no excuses (Luke 9:62). When a man first wanted to bury his father before following Christ, He told him, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22 KJV). No man was praised for obeying Christ's command to follow Him and be His disciple; it was expected. Jesus said, "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done' " (Luke 17:10).

So when do you become a Christian, a disciple of Christ? When you walk down an aisle? When you kneel at an altar? When you weep sincerely? Not necessarily. Christ's original followers became disciples when they obeyed Him, when they "immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him" (Matthew 4:22).¹

Obeying Christ's command, "Follow Me," results in self-death. Christianity without self-death is only an abstract philosophy. It is Christianity without Christ.

Perhaps the most fundamental error many Christians make is to separate receiving salvation and being a disciple. They place them on different levels of Christian maturity, assuming that it is acceptable to be saved without having to commit oneself to those more radical demands of Jesus, like "taking up the cross" and following Him (Matthew 10:38).

This assumption is grounded on the erroneous belief that salvation is primarily for man's benefit – to make him happy and to prevent eternal damnation. (pp. 15-18a)

Step 6: End by sharing personal prayer requests and each person praying for the other requests.

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