

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 16: Created to Reproduce (8a)

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

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**
19 "For what is our hope or joy or crown
of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?
Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy".

Step 3: *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter: 1 Thessalonians 2*

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

1. Which comes first? The chicken or the egg? Dying to self or becoming a disciple?
2. Phillips says that bearing fruit means reproducing in others the character that God's Spirit has created in you as a disciple. Do you agree with this simple plan? This is what you train in others.
3. Phillips also states with Paul that Jesus is uncompromising - that either a believer reproduces, or he is not a follower of Christ. If you agree, what are the implications?
4. The author also says that Satan's lie is that we are not good enough to make disciples. But it is not your goodness but the perfection of Christ in you that qualifies you to train disciples. Also, that it is not what you know, but Who you know (Jesus) that matters.
5. No doubt, discipling can be hard work but rewarding ministry! But the simple truth is that if you have died to yourself, then Christ will reproduce his character through you if you participate in His plan to advance His Kingdom, i.e., train His people.

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

Chapter 8a per the author – Keith Phillips:

Once you have died to yourself, you are a disciple. And disciples are made to reproduce. Jesus was unequivocal: "...If a man remains in me...he will bear much fruit..." John 15:5 NIV, italics added). There is no higher calling, no clearer commission in the New Testament than to reproduce in others the character that God's Spirit has created in you. Christ expects every Christian to bear spiritual fruit.

Paul reveals the significance of having healthy spiritual children: "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20 NIV, italics added).

Paul knew that simply leading a person to Christ was not enough. He regarded his labors to be in vain if his spiritual children did not become mature disciples. And mature disciples reproduce their lives in others—they bear lasting fruit. Note that Paul was writing to believers whom he had led to the Lord when he urged them to hold "fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain" (Philippians 2:16). He repeated this concern in 1 Thessalonians 3:5: "...when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless" (NIV). And to the Galatian believers he wrote, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain" (Galatians 4:11).

How could Paul dare to suggest that his renowned missionary journeys might have been wasted when their result was so many new Christians? Why did the apostle agonize over the possibility that his flock might have become carnal or worldly? The reason is obvious. Paul knew that Jesus was uncompromising: either one dies to himself and reproduces—or he is not a follower of Christ. Jesus left no other option. Christ Himself told His disciples, "...I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last..." (John 15:16 NIV, italics added).

Only the ill-informed or immature are so preoccupied with good works that they haven't got time to nurture their spiritual children to reproduction. No mature Christian is content to be spiritually barren.

Take a moment to examine your life. Is there one person walking with God today and investing in others the fullness of life he has in Christ as a result of your ministry? One man? One woman? If not, you have been unfruitful.

Perhaps you faithfully attend church, sing in the choir, usher, sponsor a youth group or serve as an elder, deacon or even a pastor. You might witness every day or teach group Bible studies. These are commendable activities but they fall short of fulfilling your high calling to make disciples.

Activity is no substitute for obedience; busyness cannot replace reproduction. One functioning disciple is more valuable in building the Church than a host of carnal believers. Resist the temptation to be so active in "Christian work" that you neglect the business of the kingdom. Reevaluate your priorities in light of Christ's commission to make disciples.

Your commitment to discipling is engendered by your love for God in response to Christ's unselfish sacrifice. Your gratitude compels you to bring glory to God by bearing much fruit. Spiritual multiplication is every disciple's earnest desire and responsibility (John 15:8).

Unfortunately, many believers hesitate to make this fundamental commitment to reproduction. Satan tells us that we are not good enough to make disciples. But do not be fooled. It is not your goodness, but the perfection of Christ in you that qualifies you to disciple others. It is not what you know but Who you know. If you have died to yourself, then Christ will reproduce His character through you.

God's Spirit used the same Peter who denied Christ three times to preach with power and boldness at Pentecost. When you willingly commit yourself to obeying your increasing knowledge of God's will, Christ transforms your weakness into strength. If you wait until you are perfect, you will never be a discipler. But when you step out in faith, God will build His kingdom through you.

Now let me add a word of caution. Discipling requires a constant commitment to self-death. Paul says, "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11). John adds, "...we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16 NIV).

Discipling is hard work. Paul "labored" to present every man complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28,29). The discipler makes a commitment to invest his life in his student: "...we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives..." (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Spiritual parenting demands many hours each week for years. It calls for the expenditure of emotional energy. Paul asks, "Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" (2 Corinthians 11:29). Pouring your life into another person is a consuming investment. Do not make a commitment before God to a discipling relationship until you count the cost.

pp. 81-83

Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Phillips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

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