

## TRAINING Disciples to Train

### Session 6: How Do You Know If You Are a Disciple? (3)

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

**Step 1:** Opening prayer

**Step 2:** Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **Matthew 7:21**

**21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

**Step 3:** *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – Matthew 7*

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

1. Based on a story about mistaken identity, why is it important to be disciples of Christ Jesus before He can use us to do His work of making disciples? That is to have the presence of a Christ-like character.
2. The world doesn't affirm that our character is more important than our skills or abilities. How can we counter this cultural principle? That is a worth-by-works mentality.
3. Do you understand that God is the only One who can move people to repentance and confession? That God is the only One who can convert people to faith in Him? Rather than develop creative evangelism skills, our job is to develop the character of Christ and then simply testify about Him and His Kingdom. Let Him do the work of converting souls.
4. A major part of the author's thesis is that among the many virtues that describe the character of Christ, there are four qualities that distinguish Jesus as God's Son and that these qualities must describe God's relationship with His Son and Christ's relationship with the Church. Do you agree that these qualities should also be present in the disciple's relationship with his or her trainer?
5. Phillips suggests that these four qualities or objectives of obedience, submission, love and prayer is our barometer to guide us in the art of serving as a disciple who makes disciples who makes disciples. We call this "training disciples to train others" and "Training Reproducing Disciples". Discuss why this emphasis on training is essential.

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

#### **Chapter 3 per the author – Keith Phillips:**

Many people claim to have experienced self-death and to be totally committed to Christ. But Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21, italics added).

The experience of Ed, a friend of mine, illustrates the seriousness of mistaken identity. When the skyrocketing price of gold ignited a rebirth of the California gold rush, Ed purchased property in the "mother lode" country, determined to strike it rich. For two months he worked eighteen-hour days, but found nothing but dirt and rocks. Then he discovered yellow ore. He thought he had hit a bonanza. He rushed the ore to the assayer's office and began planning to hire more men and to take a European vacation.

But to Ed's consternation, the assayer announced that the ore he had mined was fool's gold. Ed could not believe it. He was sure the man had made a mistake. But no matter how vigorously Ed

protested, he could not dispute the putrid sulfur smell which rose from the furnace. The ore itself settled the issue.

A miner must be certain that his find is gold before he can use it to acquire goods and services. So, it is with God. He demands that we be disciples of Christ before He can use us to do His work.

So, how do you know if you are a disciple of Christ? How do you know if you have experienced self-death and are worthy of reproduction? The indisputable evidence in discerning whether you are a spiritual version of fool's gold or the real thing is the presence of a Christ-like character. If Christ's character is missing, you have not died to yourself and are not fit for reproduction.

Perhaps the most difficult hurdle you will face is to really believe that your character is more important than your skills or abilities. This is so foreign to the world that even when you become committed to self-death, you will find it alien.

I had a great struggle with this. For years I had listened to preachers employ every emotional tactic imaginable to induce people to accept Christ. Some begged the congregation, suggesting that they would be doing Christ a favor by following Him. Others issued such broad invitations that no honest person should have been left in the pews. They urged everyone who had thought a bad thought, had entertained an impure motive or had broken one biblical teaching to come forward. They preached as if God would judge them according to the number of people who responded to their pleas, rather than on their Christ-like compassion for men.

So, I assumed that the more people I led to Christ, the more valuable I was. I tried to attract people to Christian meetings with gimmicks that prostituted the gospel: pie-throwing contests, water-balloon fights and even haunted houses. I worked hard to polish my presentation of the plan of salvation and to refine the invitations I used after preaching. Small responses to my altar calls embarrassed me. I had a worth-by-works mentality.

I always knew in my mind that only God's Spirit moved people to repentance and confession, and that I was called merely to testify, not to convert. But I acted as if the quality of my Christian life and the salvation of others depended on my skill and creativity in evangelism.

Finally, the Bible alerted me to the truth. First and foremost God wanted me to have the character of Christ—to be Christian. Only then would He work through me for His glory.

What a disarming revelation! I had mistaken activity and the response of man for righteousness. I had substituted busyness for worship. Suddenly my security in good works was devastated.

The truth was painfully obvious. One had to first be a doctor before he could treat the sick. One had to be a lawyer before he could practice law. So, of course, I had to be Christ-like before I could do the work of Christ.

Christian character consists of the combination of mental and ethical qualities that enable you to "walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). It exhibits the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23).

A careful examination of Christ's ministry reveals that among those virtues which epitomized His life, four qualities distinguished Him from every other person as God's only begotten Son. They were obedience, submission, love and prayer.

When I first discovered this, I was stunned. Could it be that God incarnate chose to build His Church on the foundation of these four qualities? They seemed characteristic of a weak person—one who depends totally on another for direction, motivation and confidence.

But that was exactly it. These qualities perfectly described Christ's relationship to the Father. Christ's strength came from His dependence upon the Almighty. And if I were to be used by God, my relationship with Him would have to be patterned after my Lord's. Christian character is built by my willing (exercising my will) to conform every aspect of my life to the image of Christ.

Some believers have sought to join our discipling ministry with the condition that their talents be used. But such a perspective is a denial of self-death and indicates that their values are warped. A disciple's main concern ought to be that his character will be built and reproduced. A Doctor of Philosophy, a Master of Divinity or a social worker is not necessarily more valuable to a missions' organization like World Impact. He is treated no differently than anyone else. We all strive to make disciples, but we know this is impossible without first being a disciple. We must know God before we can make Him known.

A disciple employs any gift or talent that builds the kingdom or edifies the body. He confidently refrains from exercising abilities that might destructively foster his pride or hinder his Christian maturity. A dead man's focus is on God. He seeks to be like Christ.

If any man had a reason to find security in his reputation, abilities or credentials it was the Apostle Paul. Yet he realized that these were rubbish compared to becoming like Christ (Philippians 3:8). A person's skill is worthless without a godly character. Of course, no mortal can achieve such qualities on his own power. But God has predestined disciples "to become conformed to the image of His Son..." (Romans 8:29).

One day I was sailing off the California coast with a friend when an unexpected, heavy fog rolled in and virtually wiped out all visibility. We were afraid we would never make it back to the harbor. We floated for about forty-five minutes in the fog bank, when suddenly we heard the faint but distinct tone of a foghorn. By fixing our course on that welcome sound and moving ever so carefully toward it, we eventually returned safely to the harbor. Had we not heard the foghorn we would have drifted aimlessly in the ocean.

If you have no target for your life, you are likely to drift without direction. If you aim at nothing, you will probably hit it. That is why you must thoroughly understand who Christ wants you to be.

Obedience, submission, love and prayer are the objectives for which you and every disciple you lead must strive. They serve as the barometer by which you can measure your growth and the progress of those whom you disciple. They are so important that we will examine them individually in the following chapters.

pp. 33-37

| Disciple's Checklist – How Do You Know If You Are a Disciple?                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Christ-like character is evidence of my self-death (being a disciple). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My character is more important than my skills or abilities.               |

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

**Source:** The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Philips. 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.

Revised 20261011