

*Volume*

**10**

# DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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**By Gbile Akanni, adapted by  
Paul Jinadu**

**Direct Discipleship  
Under GOD**

## Contents

Introduction.....	5
Abram in Discipleship Relationship with God.....	6
How did God deliver him from this trial?.....	7
There is room for growth in discipleship.....	9
How did Hagar come into Abram's life? .....	10
Personal Assessment Questions .....	14

## **Introduction**

We discover from the scriptures that discipleship is the only means designed by God to bring His children into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, which is the eternal purpose of God for saving us. It is the home training method in the household of God. Anyone who runs away from being a disciple is illegitimate child who will never inherit anything in the kingdom of God.

As we have seen discipleship is a life-long process by which God makes His children to become like Jesus. The process is personal and unique for every child of God. It is not a classroom course but a relationship.

God's method of raising disciples can be both direct and indirect (Gen 12:1-3; Mk 3:13-15; 2Tim 2:1,2). We've seen the indirect method where God used a human vessel to train and watch over that life for God. In each case, however, the Lord is the overall Master and the conditions and principles are the same. It is richer when both methods are employed in raising a man of God.

Abram is an example of a man directly disciple by God. Enoch and Noah were other examples, where no human vessels were available. When God cannot find a mature hand to bring up a soul for Him in discipleship, He could do it by Himself alone. However, that is not His normal way (Ps 115:16).

## **Abram in Discipleship Relationship with God**

Abraham was the first born of aged parents, and loaded with many responsibilities. Yet he left it all to walk with God. He faced many personal issues. He and Sarai were childless, and Abraham had the responsibility of bringing up his nephew, Lot, the son of his younger brother, Haran (who had died). If Abram could answer the call to discipleship with all these challenges, and go through it, we have no excuse.

For Abram discipleship meant denying himself. That self was embodied in his love for his country and his father's house. He was to take up His 'cross', and he did. He bore the reproach of following an invisible God to an unknown destination, with a promise that was in the natural unrealistic. But he did obey, and by so doing entered a disciple relationship with God. We cannot do less if we want to satisfy God's desire.

*Discipleship is not without trials. **Discuss the trials Abram faced in Gen 12:8-20***

Discipleship is like a master-apprentice or teacher-pupil relationship. As students have to take exams before promotion to the next level of training so it is with disciples. God sometimes allows certain trials to come our way in order to prove us and approve us for the next stage of our training. If we don't pass the test, we repeat class. Many of us have found ourselves repeating the same lesson over and over again and receiving heavenly rebukes each time. That will definitely hinder one's progress in his walk with the Lord, and the reason why some who are first become last.

Abram was faced with the trial of famine though he was in the will of God, in the land of promise. We may be in the perfect will of God and still face famine.

What was Abram's reaction to these trials? (Gen 12:16; 16:1) Instead of calling on the Lord whom he followed into that land, we are not told that he prayed. Instead he went down to Egypt and sold his wife for food and told lies. But his lie was exposed and rebuked by the Egyptian king. The devil also planted an Egyptian maidservant into his family, who later became an alternative to Sarah and God's promise for him (Gen 12:16; 16:1).

**How did God deliver him from this trial?**

(Gen 12:17,20; Ps 34:19)

God saw the submission and innocence of Sarai and probably her trust in God (1Pet 3:5,6), and so plagued Pharaoh's household. God then provided a way of escape for Abram. He prompted Pharaoh for send Abram out of Egypt, and back into God's plan for his future. In times of temptation God will always provide a way of escape, which we must take with open arms.

***What did Abram do after this in order to restore his relationship with God? (Gen 13:1-4; Ezek 33:13)***

When a righteous man, who has been righteous all his life, falls into sin, all his righteousness will be forgotten. That is the principle in the Bible. You go back to zero level and begin again. Abram had to return to Bethel where he had made an altar to God at the beginning and start afresh. Even with that the way back to Bethel from Egypt was not straightforward. He had to go from Egypt to

the Neger and then to Bethel. Whereas from the land of promise to Egypt was an expressway. (He went straight down to Egypt).

The way unto restoration is always more difficult than the way unto backsliding. Nevertheless it is better to pass through it and get restored as Abraham did than to continue in backsliding and lose all.

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss the role played by Lot in Abram's life and relationship with God (Gen 12:5, 13:1,5-11; 14:8-14).*

**God called Abram and Lot went with him.** That was an opportunity for Lot to learn the life and relationship of Abram with God and partake in the blessing of Abram. But he would not. He lifted up his eyes in pride (against his uncle), choosing his land before his uncle chose, and ending up making the wrong choice. Abram, on the other hand, grew in conformity to God's character. He chose the path of meekness in dealing with Lot, who decided to go his separate way.

### **Discipleship involves spiritual growth.**

As we walk with the Lord and with our disciples we must use the challenges we face there to develop our character into conformity of the image of Christ. We must grow both in service as well as character.

Question you need to ask yourself: "Have you been following Jesus and your character has not changed from that of the old self? Then you are not growing and your inheritance (the purpose of God for your life) may be delayed from getting into your hands.

## **There is room for growth in discipleship.**

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss Abram's growth in his relationship with God and consequently in his vision (Gen 13:7-9, 14:8-14, 21:24).*

Discover his growth in vision as you compare Gen 12:2,3 with Gen 13:14-18. We can see Abram's growth in character from the way he related to Lot. He was humble, meek, peaceable and kind.

He showed kindness by the way he went with his soldiers to deliver Lot, instead of taking revenge. He consequently grew in vision. When you grow in conformity to the character and lifestyle of the Lord Jesus God enlarges your scope and adds to His promises for your life. His blessings increase over your life. However, if you keep marking time around the same wrong habit or behavior that God has been warning you about, you not also progress in vision.

God does not release his promises and anointing on a man at once. He does so in stages, depending on one's growth in life and character.

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss how Abram handled the trial of barrenness that confronted him (Gen 15:1-4; Jas 1:2-4).*

His problem of barrenness dominated his thoughts so much that he could no longer see the value of possessing God. (God Himself becoming his exceeding great reward). Rather he complained.

In our life's journey we keep facing one trial or other but our attitude as we follow the Lord must be Phil 4:6,7. Complaining will us into more trouble as it happened and the children later on in the wilderness. Instead of worrying and complaining one should rather learn to pray and give thanks.

### **How did Hagar come into Abram's life?**

(Gen 12:16, 16:1,2)

She was one of the items given as a bride price to Abram by Pharaoh in exchange for Sarai his wife. However, when his wife was restored to him, instead of making restitution by giving back the bride price, he went away with everything. He went away with trouble that has become the trouble of the whole world today: the Ishmaelites that came from Hagar the Egyptian.

### **Are there things you did against another person while an unbeliever or a backslider?**

You must make restitutions where possible both now and in the future to keep your records clean with God. It is part of the Christian life. One of the first signs of repentance in Zacchaeus was his readiness to make restitutions of his past wrong doings.

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss the effect of Hagar's life on Abram's home and his discipleship relationship with God (Gen 16:1-16, 15,16; 17:1,15-19).*

*How was he restored?*

*What lessons can we learn from here?*

Hagar became an alternative to Sarai, a stumbling block to the man of God, Abram. He went into her, and so went into the devil's trap. Hagar conceived and quarrels started in the house of the man of God. He became a polygamous man and the presence of

God departed from him for 13 years. No prayer, no building of any altar; he was in darkness.

In Gen 17:1 God came back and had to introduce Himself to Abram afresh, as if he was an unbeliever who never knew God. Abram had to start afresh to learn how to walk with God. Because of the stubbornness of his flesh, causing him to fall into sin often, he had to be wounded, through circumcision. He had to bleed. God had to renew His covenant with Abram and change his name to Abraham.

Despite this Abraham's passion and tenacity of having a child was so much that he argued with God and pleaded for Ishmael to live. Maybe God would have finished with Ishmael forever but he pleaded for Ishmael, the fruit of his sinful nature to live.

That is a great lesson for us who desire to follow Jesus. Don't pray for your Ishmael to live. Let God deal with him as he wills. We must watch our lives, our steps and be surrendered to the will of God at all cost.

**After 13 years of backsliding, Abraham was restored** (though with pains) and he grew in his relationship with God (Gen 18:1-8' 18:17-19, 23-25).

He grew in his character

He grew in hospitality

God had a good testimony about him, and he knew God's character also in a deeper way (Gen 18:23-25).

In discipleship relationship the disciple and his discipler get to know each other better.

**God's promise to give Abraham a son became fulfilled after 25 years' wait** (Gen 25:1-5; Lam 3:25,26). God is ever faithful to His promises. It is painful to note that Abraham waited 13 years of our 25 because of his carelessness, and not because of God's delays. Abraham was faced with yet another trial ( Gen 22:1-3; Heb 11:17-19).

***Discuss** the implication of this trial and Abraham's attitude to the trial this time around.*

Isaac was becoming an idol in Abraham's heart, and God does not tolerate rivals. So Abraham faced another trial when God asked him to go and sacrifice Isaac, the one he loved. That meant he would become childless again. It was a great trial. This time round Abraham had learnt his lesson. He believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. He obeyed God and proved his unequalled love for the Lord.

What is your Isaac that is creeping into your heart and trying to become an idol in your heart? For God to commit Himself to you in a greater dimension, you must prove your unrivalled love for Him. You must be willing to sacrifice that "Isaac' to the Lord.

You will notice that God did not provide a way of escape for Abraham until he actually took a knife to slaughter Isaac. In his heart Isaac was already dead. Every Isaac in our hearts must be sacrificed to the Lord.

**Discuss** the reward of Abraham's obedience in this scripture (Gen 22:15-18; Gal 6:6-9)

Abraham received a greater blessing for his obedience. He sowed to the Spirit and reaped life.

Where do you throw your allegiance? Whom do you obey? The Spirit or your human nature?

Abraham stayed, lived and died in the land of promise. He stayed within the promise of God for his life, without looking back or returning to the land he came from. God, on His part, fulfilled His promises, which never fail.

## Personal Assessment Questions

1. *Each one of us ought to be in direct discipleship relationship with the Lord Jesus (even as Abraham walked with God). This does not negate our relationship with human disciplers God posts on our path.*
  - (a) *Give an outline of your discipleship relationship with the Lord since you met Him. Indicate the how, when, where and specific instances of each step or segment of your walk with the Lord.*
  - (b) *What conditions would you say you fulfilled at the onset?*
  
2. (a) *What are the trials in your own walk with the Lord?*
  - (b) *Discuss your own 'ups' and 'downs'. Your 'blackouts' and what caused them. How long did each last? How did you get restored?*
  
3. (a) *What personal lessons did you learn from God directly, when and how?*
  - (b) *What effect has these created on your life?*