

*Volume*

**3**

# DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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Definition, Concept and  
Basis for Discipleship

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## **Introduction**

We have seen so far God has on offer an inheritance for all born again Christians, but only condition we become conformed to the image of Christ. To get us to this place of identity with Christ we need to go through the process of discipleship. Although at conversion all the attributes of Christ were potentially ours, but they are in immature and undeveloped stages. It is through discipleship training that these qualities are formed and matured.

Our study of the Word on the subject of discipleship, to discover the concept and basis for it, will not be for head knowledge alone. We need a heart experience as well. Therefore you should pray throughout this study that God would grant you a personal revelation that will lead to transformation and change in both lifestyle and outlook

## **A. Definition and Concept**

- i) Discipleship is a process of reproducing or imparting the life of a teacher to a pupil. It is a life-long process of systematic way of making someone to be conformed or transformed to the image of the master – in this case the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii) Without this conformity to His image Jesus will ultimately become ashamed to call us brethren.
- iii) Before an heir can inherit the father's estate he must be trained to grow up to the challenge that comes with his responsibility. It involves training and discipline. The tutors and trainers of the Kingdom are the men and women chosen under God to see to our development. Without this training we cannot take hold of our rightful possession. We may even become outcasts.
- iv) Discipleship is a personal apprenticeship under the Master with a view of becoming like Him (Lk 6:40; Mt 4:19-20; 11:29,30). God's way with each disciple is unique and should not be compared to others.  
Consider Christ's dealings with Peter (John 21:15-25; Thomas in John 20:19,20, 24-29).  
Compare these with the labourer in Matt 20:1-6, "Take what is yours and go your way – is it not lawful for me (the Master) to do what I will with my own?"
- v) When the disciple has made real progress in his discipleship relationship with the Lord, his character, deeds and manner of life and speech show that he "...had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13; Mt 26:69-73; Acts 11:26).

## **B. Who is a Disciple?**

After being born again a person becomes a disciple by putting his neck under the yoke of Christ. To be taught and nurtured by Him until he becomes like his Master.

In Mt 11:29,30 the Bible talks about two rests. "Come unto me ... and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and...you will find rest unto your soul". When a man laden with sin and its consequences of sickness and demon attacks surrenders to Christ's Lordship, immediately he comes into a place of rest from strife and sorrow.

But that's not the end of the story. Salvation, healing and deliverance are not all God has in store for the repentant sinner. There is another rest for the believer, but he must meet certain conditions. You must take His yoke upon you and learn of Him. That is discipleship, and it is a voluntary act on our part. We freely choose to make Him our Saviour from sin, and we also freely choose to make Him Lord of our lives.

A wooden yoke used to be placed around the necks of two working farm animals. It is common practice to yoke a new animal to an experienced and stronger animal. The experienced one is well trained and knows what to do in ploughing the field. Unless the new animal toes the line and follows the other one precisely he would find life very tough indeed. So we, too, are called to be yoked unto Jesus, so we can learn from Him.

The disciple must trust the Master implicitly, and do everything he is directed to do. He sees everything permitted in his life as divine apparatus to get him to conform to the image of the Master.

A disciple is not choosy. He does not mind by what means the Master chooses to hammer him into shape (Job 19:25-27; 2Cor 4:16,17; Eccl 3:11; Rom 8:28). He accepts joyfully the master's decisions as the best. He believes in the love of the master. His confession is: "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God".

### **C. The Need for Discipleship**

For anyone to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and partake of the kingdom of God, and have eternal life, he must become a disciple of Jesus. Rom 8:28-30; Gen 12:1-3; Mt 4:19

Compare Mk 10:17,21 and Lk 9:23. Looking at Mk 10:17,21 and Lk 9:23, we see that the rich young ruler, asking Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, received the same answer as the condition for becoming a disciple in Lk 9:23. That means that to actually obtain eternal life, you must be a disciple. If someone dies immediately after becoming born again, he is surely saved. However, as long as a born again Christian lives, discipleship is the answer to eventually inheriting eternal life.

Discipleship is God's way of bringing a man into close and deep relationship with Jesus. It's God way of making us be at His disposal, and tied up for the Master's use (Mk 3:13-15; 1Kg 19:19-21).

You will notice from that scripture that the first thing Jesus required of His disciples was that they should be with Him. Preaching, healing the sick and casting out demons were secondary. Indeed when God wants to use a man in ministry He will choose among those who are with Him. He does not send people He does not know; people He has to run after before He can get them. He prefers to use people who are acquainted with His life and purpose.

It means for you to be a disciple of Jesus you must be with Him. It is compulsory. Secondly, the disciples were called "...that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14). The word 'might' here means 'maybe' or 'probably'. That means it is not compulsory, depending on what the Master wanted to do. But to be with Him is compulsory for every disciple. Discipleship, therefore, is God's way of recruiting men to be with Jesus, under His training and at His disposal. If you have not accepted to be with the Lord in this way, you better forget about being used by God for any noble purpose.

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss the 'quiver' in these scriptures Isa 49:2; Ps 127:4,5. Some arrows may be in God's quiver while some are lying in the field or somewhere else. What does that mean in terms of discipleship? What is the difference between these arrows?*

God uses the instrument of discipleship to separate a Christian from the world system, and from whatever has been his priority in life, and consecrate him to the Lord. Mk 11:1-6; Mt 4:18-22. Compare with Lk 18:22-25.

For Andrew, Peter, James and John their father and their fishing business have been their priorities. They could not go on like that and still be the disciples of Jesus. So they had to be separated from all of them to be able to follow Jesus.

### **Discussion Point**

*Discuss the likely experiences endured by the donkey tied down compared to other free donkeys (Mk 11:1-6).*

It was not tied down in vain. When the Lord needed to ride a donkey to Jerusalem He picked the one that was tied down. He did not choose from those roaming free. When Jesus needs someone to 'ride upon' to go into His Jerusalem He will only use those who have been committed to Him in discipleship relationship. The period of being tied down may not be easy, but glory time is coming.

God does not reveal His secrets to the multitude of uncommitted people, but to disciples. (Mat 5:1,2; 10:1; 24:1-5; 26:1,2; Lk 9:28-30).

All the secrets of the kingdom taught by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, and all the secrets of the signs of His coming were revealed to the disciples, and not to the crowd. He spoke to the

crowd in parables. Same with us: those not in discipleship relationship with Jesus only get scriptures in parables.

Jesus also needs to know those who are His in covenant relationship, people He can depend on to build His church, and to fight His battles. (Lk 14:25-33; Mt 16:18; Lk 14:25-27). Though multitudes followed Jesus and hung on his every word, He could not rely on them to fulfill His mission. He needed disciples, who could be counted on to stand and build with Him, and stand against the forces of darkness waging war against His purpose.

#### **D. The Supreme Objective of Discipleship**

Rom 8:28-30; Heb 2:11; Eph 4:11-16; Lk 6:40

Every born again Christian has been predestined by God to be conformed to the image of Christ and to become like Him. That's the goal of discipleship. God's pleasure is not only to have Jesus as His only begotten Son, but to have many children like Him, so that at best, Jesus will only be first among many brethren. God saved us with that intention.

If we are to be joint-heir with Jesus then we must become like Him, to be fair. Secondly in order for Jesus not to be ashamed to call us brethren we need to be of the same stock, of like nature with Him, so that we would have the potential to be like Him. It is through discipleship that every Christian believer is molded and fashioned to become like Jesus. As you enter into discipleship relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with whosoever He puts you under you must have this goal at the back of your mind.

God's expectation of you is to become like Jesus, the first-born Son, the Pattern Son.

### **Personal Assessment Questions**

1. *No discipleship process can turn a man into the image of Christ, except he has the experience of the new birth. Are you born again? Share with us when, where and how you became a Christian.*
2. *What definite changes took place in your life when you first believed? What about now? Have you at any time or point experience a sliding back in this changed life? If so, what caused it? Explain. Could you trace this condition to a lack of discipleship or what?*
3. *Are you a disciple in the context of this study? What areas of your life are in conflict with who a disciple should be? What personal decisions have you taken to rectify this?*
4. *How much of discipleship have you experienced since you repented of sin and committed your life to Christ? How did it happen?*
5. *In what areas of your life do you need intimate, consistent and concerted discipleship?*
6. *What other things has God taught you as you went through this study outline? What prayer requests are uppermost in your mind for which we could stand with you before the Lord?*