

Volume

8

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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Steps unto
Following JESUS

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Understanding His mind (Prov 23:7; Phil 2:5)

This is the first step we must take in order to follow Jesus and walk in His steps.

*We need to understand His mind,
What is behind His action,
What made Him to do what He did,
How He looks at situations.*

Our steps in following Jesus will be arbitrary, meaningless and unnecessarily difficult unless we understand the thoughts behind His actions. This is necessary because as a man thinks in his heart so he is.

Discussion Point

(i) Discuss the mind Jesus had that made Him to take the steps He took (Phil 2:5-11; Heb 12:2-4; 1Jn 3:16; Rom 5:7,8; Lk 23:34; 1Cor 1:27-29)

“Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Jesus Christ, who though he was God, did not demand and cling to His right as God, but laid down his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And he humbled himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal’s death on a cross” (Phil 2:5-8)

What attitude do you discover in Christ here? Is it that of humility, that of meekness. Even though he was God he did not cling to his right as God. That is meekness. You can confirm this in Lk 9:53-

56; Jn 18:10,11; Mt 27:12-14. He never used his right as God to defend **self**. Even to come down to earth in human form he had to put aside his rights as God. He laid it down to one side even right up to the crucifixion. You cannot cling to your rights and think you are following Jesus.

You have rights...but at every point and in every situation you must be willing to release your rights in order for the will of God to be done. Men may cheat you and deny you your right, but you will do well by being like Jesus and not cling to your rights.

It was humility that made Jesus lay aside his power and glory and take upon himself the form of a man. He bent down to serve men, even though He was God. He went further by allowing ordinary men to crucify him even though he was not a criminal. He could have shown them his power and punish them in revenge. But he did not.

Could you be manifesting your authority and power to revenge and defend yourself in the face of provocation and still think you are a follower of Jesus?

It is necessary to understand and cultivate this mind, this attitude of meekness and humility, and let it be rooted in us, if we want to follow Jesus effectively. You can also see an attitude of love, longsuffering, forgiveness, mercy, faithfulness, lowliness of mind exhibited by the Lord Jesus.

Look at the lowliness of mind in the following instances:

- a) The way he came into the world (Lk 1:26,27; Mt 13:55). He did not come through the royal family or the high priesthood but through a humble peasant. His birth was announced not to the politicians or high society but to humble shepherds. He identified with the lowly at his birth (Rom 12:16).
- b) His forerunner, John the Baptist, was rugged and simple (Lk 3:7-9; Mk 1:6-8). He did not choose orators or men of high taste. He was lowly in his choice.
- c) He chose ordinary fishermen as his disciples, and not Pharisees or Scribes.

Are you lowly in your choices?

(ii) Discuss His life goal in order to understand His mind (Ps 40:6-8; Heb 10:6-9; Jn 4:32-34).

He came with the attitude of obedience. His mind and His delight is to do the will of God, not to fulfill any selfish ambitions.

You cannot insist on satisfying your own pleasure and think you can follow Jesus. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, the mind to always do the will of God even when it hurts.

(iii) What understanding of His mind can you discover from His pattern of life, leadership and service? (Mt 20:25-28; Jn 13:4,5, 12-17; Phil 2:7; Isa 53:1-9).

His pattern of life is that of humility and no reputation. He would not make a big name for himself. Contrary to the world's principles, for Jesus, leadership means service and the way into Spiritual Leadership is to bend down and serve.

(iv) Jesus never depended on Himself or want independence though at his disposal (Jn 5:19,30-32; 8:28,29; Heb 5:5-8).

He did not seek his own glory but God's glory. He did not do anything of himself, only what His Father wanted him to do.

Unsetting the 'Settings' of the Old Mind

The way our old mind is set is the basis of our action and behavior. So we need to examine the old mind in the light of God's word so it can be unset.

Discussion Point

(i) Discuss the practical implications of a mind that is set (Rom 8:4-8; Eph 4:17-20; Phil 3:17-19; James 4:4,5; 1Jn 2:15-17).

Anything a man sets his mind upon is what he thinks about and what he aims at achieving. For example, if you believe you cannot be influential unless you are rich, that is what will control your mind. That is what your mind will aim at achieving.

If you set your mind on pleasing the Lord at all cost, that is what you will keep thinking about, and aim to achieve. Your desires will be towards the things of the Lord and your behavior will be to please Him. Just like your radio or television programmes depend on the frequency set, so you cannot set your mind on the things of the earth and receive the things of the Spirit. Before you can set your mind on the things above, you have to undo the setting of your old mind. This is necessary before your mind can be renewed successfully with the word of God.

(ii) What is the mode of life and conduct that the old mind was set upon? (Rom 8:4-8; Eph 4:17-20; Phil 3:17-19; James 4:4,5; 1John2:15-17).

It is clear that the old mind was set upon what the human nature wants, not what God wants. No matter how you try to serve God with that mind, it will only achieve what the human nature wants. It

was a futile mind that works all uncleanness with greediness. It was a mind set on earthly things.

Look inside: what are the things you have set your mind to achieve in life or even in your marriage? Don't rush over this. Bring them out sincerely one by one and see whether they are things on the earth or things above. That will help you to cry to the Lord and unset those things as a preparation for setting your mind on things above.

(iii) For example, discuss the already set understanding of the world system (the old mind) about the following concepts:

- a) *Prosperity and success*
- b) *Beauty*

Compare this with the Biblical (or spiritual) understanding of the same concept (Gen 39:3,21; Josh 1:8; 1Pet 3:3-5).

What did you discover?

In the world prosperity or success is synonymous with wealth, popularity, power, position. But in God's own perspective none of those things make a man prosperous. A prosperous man is a man who has God on his side. Joseph was a slave and later a prisoner, yet he was described as a prosperous man, because the Lord was with him.

What would make Joshua prosperous and have good success was not money or popularity: it was as he walked closely with God, studying and meditating on His word day and night.

In the world someone is said to be beautiful depending on her external appearance. But in God's sight, even though someone may look beautiful in appearance, she is not beautiful in God's sight unless she has a meek and quiet spirit. That is the set spiritual understanding of beauty.

Before you can successfully have your mind set on things above, there is need to carefully unset the settings of the old mind and have your mind renewed and set on heavenly things. Your understanding of things must change and be in line with God's own understanding of such things so that your desires can become right.

Cultivating the mind of Christ

Cultivating requires clearing off, breaking up the ground and planting of a new seed. This is to be followed by proper weeding and watering.

Discuss how we can cultivate the mind of Christ taking the following steps:

(i) Clear off the old mind *Jn 3:3-7; Eph 4:17-22; Ezek 36:25-27; Ps 51:10).*

There's a need for a saving encounter with the Lord, a supernatural removal of the natural heart by God as you surrender to Christ to save you. It cannot be done by the energy of the flesh. The natural heart cannot be improved upon. It has to be removed and replaced. Therefore the settings of your old mind have to be identified and put off deliberately.

(ii) Break up the fallow ground (*Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12; Joel 2:13; Ps 34:18*)

What does it mean and how can we achieve this? Be concerned about the fallowness of your heart. Mourn over your situation. Let it touch your heart and not just your face. When you understand what you stand to lose if you continue with thorns and thistles in your heart, you will cry to out. You will need to pray. A broken and a contrite heart God does not overlook. It is a necessary preparation for receiving heavenly seed on the soil of your heart.

(iii) Cleanse and renew your mind(*Eph 4:22,23; Rom 12:1,2; James 4:8; Eph 5:26; Ps 119:9-11*)

While the blood of Jesus washes away and cleanses the heart from sin and its guilt, the word of God is His instrument for cleansing and renewing the mind. There is need for constant, daily, regular reading and studying of God's word for this purpose.

You cannot be lazy at studying the word of God and hope to be renewed. The mind of Christ is embedded in the word of God. It only becomes yours as the word of God gets engrafted inside you.

(iv) Feed and fill your mind with the word of God(1Pet 2:2; Col 3:16; Isa 5:13,14)

A sparing sowing of God's word in your mind is not enough. Any little space or aspect of your life that is not filled with the word of God will soon grow weeds, the weeds of the natural mind. It will also be the loophole through which the devil creeps in to trouble you. Make no room for the flesh.

(v) What is the attitude and goal of a renewed mind? (Phil 1:20,21; 3:7-11; Heb 10:5-7)

Set your heart, mind and body to know and to please the Lord at all cost. Let that be your goal, your only goal in life. Then it will not be difficult to follow Jesus.

Personal Assessment Questions

1. *You cannot follow Jesus except you understand the mind behind his actions. What strikes you about the mind of Christ? What definite difference do you notice between His mind and yours?*
2. *(a) What are the settings of your old mind, which have affected:*
 - (i) Your walk with God in life generally*
 - (ii) Your marriage?*
 - (iii) Your ambition?*

Discuss this practically and sincerely, giving instances.

(b) How much changes have you experienced since our studies on self, victory over self, carrying your cross daily, etc.? Illustrate with definite examples.

3. *What practical steps are you taking daily to reset and offset the settings of the old mind?*