

Effective Discipleship

And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:49, 50).

For the next two weeks in the teen through adult Sunday morning Bible Study lessons, we shall be studying the subject of discipleship. The word "disciple" comes from the same root word from which we obtain "discipline." This will help clarify what we mean about discipleship. The dictionary definition of discipline means (1) a subject that is taught: a field of study (2) training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character (3) control gained by enforcing obedience or order (4) orderly or prescribed behavior (5) to train or develop by instruction and exercise especially in self-control (6) to punish or penalize for the sake of discipline (7) to bring (a group) under control (troops).

Discipleship is that intimate union with Christ that works its way out in practical service for Him. It helps us develop into "on mission" Christians. It takes us beyond the "pew warmer" to the battlefield. Discipleship disentangles us from this world and makes us "...a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy 2:21). "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Timothy 2:3,4).

Discipleship is a system of training for others and ourselves into the disciplined life that makes a radical difference in our effectiveness. We need to do three things to become accomplished in discipleship. We need:

I. Internal Investigation

We need to closely examine our life to make sure we are "on line" with the Lord. Have you ever prayed that God would give you biblical convictions? So often I hear Christians complaining about the strictness some conscientious Christians adhere to. The complaints against a separated lifestyle sound something like this, "I don't want you to "get on my case" about this because God has just not convicted me about this issue."

The question I ask you is, "Have you prayed, 'Dear Lord, is this valid? Do I need this in my life? And may I please be for everything you are for and against everything you are against?'" David was not looking for ways to escape holy convictions when he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

We have far too many trying to get out of discipleship. Getting into discipleship means inviting a lifestyle that makes frequent internal investigation of our life before God and others normality. The late Vance Havner said that the average Christian is so backslidden that he would have to backslide to fit in (with the church and her activities).

For effective discipleship, we need the self-investigators who keep themselves wholly and holy unto the Lord! If others are constantly pulling us up to a righteous lifestyle, then we will become dead weight in the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

For effective discipleship each us should have:

II. Important People

All of us need three types of people in our lives. First, we need mentors who are resourceful, secondly, we need peers who are encouraging and thirdly, we need apprentices who are teachable. (a) Mentors who are resourceful. If you don't have one already, find one! A mentor is someone we look up

to, usually older, who is a tutor and coach into Christ-likeness. Do not make this a random search; pray about it! The last thing you need is finding someone who is a counselor into the things of Christ who brings you down instead of up spiritually. The mentor will keep pulling you along and challenging you to greater heights of devotion and service. (b) Peers who are encouraging. This is someone of your spiritual equal. Not just not any spiritual equal; one who, like the mentor, lifts and prods us on to dedication. A peer is one with whom you worship together, pray with and play with. Nothing could be more dangerous to our spirituality than to be surrounded by friends who are not interested in "going on with God!" The downfall of Prince Amnon, David's oldest son came when he associated with a friend, who although a relative, led him into a sin that eventually cost him his life. "But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil (crafty and shrewd) man" (II Samuel 13:3). By contrast we need the kind of friends who can by God's grace say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). (3) Apprentices who are teachable. This is how effective discipleship will be carried on. We need to be on the lookout for those young or immature Christians who are willing to be trained in service for God. Put them "under your wing." Have Bible study, go to coffee together, and live the life in front of them that teaches by example. This is what Paul was talking about when he said to Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:1,2).

Let us finally:

III. Incorporate Boundaries

A dedicated Christian businessman whom I admire is Dan Patrick, owner of KSEV radio. When he was in high school he tells of a time when he was growing up in Baltimore. He allowed a group of (wrong) friends to talk him into skipping his first and only day of school. While in high school some of his friends talked him into ditching classes to enjoy a full day of eighteen holes on the golf course. They were "nice" enough to even volunteer to pick him up. What Dan was not aware of was on that day, after years of fighting the city of Baltimore to re-pave their street, the neighbors (including his Dad) had finally won the battle and the same day Dan decided to "ditch" was the same day the city was paving their street. Because Dan did not drive his car to school, the city paved up to Dan's house and then picked up the nice beautiful, smooth pavement on the other side of his house. Dan was discovered! When he came home he immediately knew what had happened. I might add, so did his Dad! And so did all the neighbors on the block. Dan said, for years afterward, as he bumped along the rough piece of street in front of his house, he understood the consequences of not doing right. He never skipped school again!

The most valuable lesson my father taught me growing up was obedience to the unenforceable. This means doing right when there is no one around to make you do right. Had Dan's father left for work after it was time for Dan to go to school, Dan would have no doubt been encouraged to go to school. It is not difficult to do the right thing when there is someone standing over you to do right. Effective discipleship takes place when we incorporate our own boundaries. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). We will never be a disciple or be effective in discipling others until we move into the advanced stage of Christian growth that sets our own standards.

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](http://www.christchurchbaptist.org/Pastors%20Word/Effective%20Discipleship.htm)