

## The Essence of Discipleship

Discipleship is making disciples of Jesus. OK, that's obvious when we think about it but helping people really connect with Jesus tends to be overshadowed by a list of tasks to be fulfilled - reading scripture, praying to Jesus, pursuing fellowship and accountability, sharing our faith, and so on.

Jesus Himself modeled discipleship for us. He was discipled by His Father.

"He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple" (Is.50:4,5).

"I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (Jn.8:28).

If we are to be discipled by Jesus then our primary goal is to learn how to hear and respond to Him. Whether we are reading Scripture, walking with other believers or sharing our faith, we need to be open to the instruction of the Holy Spirit Who has been given as our Helper to lead us into all truth. Dependence on Him is even necessary if we are to pray effectively (Rom.8:26). And, of course, praying itself is severely limited and soon becomes robbed of enjoyment if we are not listening to Him and entering into dialogue with Him so He can guide and encourage us.

Disciplers all too often find they are weighed down and drained by trying to give the disciples the answers and help they need. Now of course, patience and endurance are often required in coming alongside someone and helping them grow in Christ. The problem is that disciplers often cultivate, maybe unwittingly, a dependence on themselves as source – instead of dependence on Jesus. What a relief it is for disciplers to recognize the radical difference!

From the outset, a disciple should learn they can turn to Jesus, ask Him about anything and receive what He has for them. That they can bring to Him burdens and difficulties, problems and pain, and get help and encouragement directly from the One who knows and understands them like no other.

***Disciplers are only effective to the degree that they point others to Jesus and help them engage with Him!***

Sadly, it is all too common for disciples to become so dependent on the discipler, mentor, elder, pastor or close friend that they are at a loss when they find themselves in a situation where they no longer have access to their help and encouragement. They have not experienced the reality of deep friendship with Jesus. They have not cultivated a lifestyle of enjoyable intimacy with Him that meets the deepest needs of their hearts.

Modeling and leading disciples to enter into a simple two-way conversation with God builds confidence in turning to Him as their Father, Comforter, Shepherd, Teacher, Guide, Healer, Deliverer and closest Friend. Impediments to our growth in Christ will be revealed and overcome as we come to the 'Wonderful Counselor'.

The disciple is not limited to the strengths or weaknesses of the discipler but is able to access the unlimited counsel of God!

This is why every discipler should learn how to facilitate the disciple's connection with the Father.

Cultivating a lifestyle of "tending your heart" is a simple and very effective way to facilitate dialogue with Jesus - enjoying His companionship, processing heart issues with Him and learning from Him.

Confidence in coming to the Father and immediately receiving from Him what our hearts need is the birthright and gift offered every believer.