

A Biblical Model of Discipleship

(Philippians 3:8-17)

Sundays, July 7 & 14, 2024

To make one a disciple certainly includes the use of the mind, as well as the heart and will. Unless there is a heart change, or a change of life-style, a genuine conversion through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, one cannot become a true disciple.

Discipling is a process whereby a teacher and student are welded, and molded together as one, and the student readily accepts the authority of the teacher, honoring, respecting, identifying, and practicing what is or has been taught by the teacher. Thus, through prayer, doctrinal instruction, fellowship, and practical experience, the disciple grows, matures, and becomes a living example of appropriated truth (John 8:3).

Jesus used the word disciple more than any person in the Bible. The modern use of the word disciple is much less intensive than in biblical times. When Jesus called to discipleship, He called to a profound life-changing commitment which was understood by Jews, Greeks, and Romans to be complete. He called people to a primary loyalty to Himself that shaped the whole life. A disciple is committed to Jesus even when he or she does not understand His leading.

The word discipleship includes every concept believers need to know, and every action they need to take. It emphasizes the acquiring of knowledge; the practicing personal devotion and the life of Ministry to meet social and personal needs.

Jesus makes this clear, *“if you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples.”* *“Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:31-31, NIV) Jesus teaches that obedient service is the basic expression of discipleship. This service is never optional to a disciple. The Apostle Paul says,

“join with others in following my example, brothers and take note of those who live accordingly to the pattern we gave you” (Philippians 3:17, NIV).

Notice Paul’s goals as a disciple of the Lord Jesus found in Phillipians 3:8-17 where he makes three (3) great affirmations.

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”

“I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

“Not that I have already obtained all things, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me”

So, Paul tells us that he sought to know Christ; to gain Christ; and to Press On!

Sunday, July 21, 2024

I. A Disciple seeks to know Christ!

Paul wrote about the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ in verse 8, then in verse 10, he writes it again saying, *“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His suffering”* (NIV). Paul referred to knowing Christ in an intimate way, even though he already knew Christ as his Lord. By examining the verb Paul chose to use, we find his deeper meaning, in that, *“to know,”* reveals that Paul knew Christ in a personal way. He knew Christ by deep, profound, personal experiences which came only by experiencing a walk with Him daily. To know someone like this requires knowing by personal experience. Paul was a scholar and Theologian, but after he learned Christ, all that other knowledge seemed to fade. He says, *“I want to know Christ!”* The more he knew Him, the more he wanted to know about Him! Paul wrapped his life around Jesus and Jesus wrapped His arms around Paul.

Sunday, July 28, 2024

II. To Know the Power of the Resurrection!

When we come to know Christ in salvation, we are introduced to resurrection power. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, *“for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes: to the Jew first and also the Greek.”* Resurrection Power produces spiritual oneness with the risen Christ. Do you realize what that means? You and I are promised an inexhaustible energy that we can tap into, to carry out the work of our Lord. The individual and the church both have that power available.

Sunday, August 4, 2024

We live in a world dominated by fear. According to Paul’s prayer for God’s people in Ephesians 1:17-23, our greatest need is for healing and healing comes through redemptive spiritual energy that flows from the heart of the risen Savior to the hearts of surrendered disciples. Paul first experienced this power of God on the Damascus Road. It stopped him, broke him, softened him, won him, and transformed his life.

Paul wanted to know the power of His Resurrection. He wanted to know Him in a personal, experiential, and progressive way. We should value our relationship with Christ as more important than anything else. To know Christ should be our ultimate goal.

Sunday, August 11, 2024

III. To Know the “Fellowship of His Suffering!”

Paul was not referring to sharing Christ’s death on the cross, that suffering could not be shared, because that suffering belonged to Christ alone, but Paul wanted to participate with Christ, as a believer, in suffering for the gospel. Even as Paul had already suffered greatly for the gospel and was suffering in prison at the writing of his letter to the Philippians, he still wanted to know, firsthand, what it meant to suffer for Christ. The sufferings of Christ are those afflictions that we

suffer as we do Christ's Ministry. Christ suffers with His people because they are united with Him.

To know someone, you must know their heartaches and sorrows. What is the greatest burden and heartache of Jesus? (Matthew 9:36-38) Jesus suffered and died for the lostness of mankind. We will never know Jesus unless we know the suffering of His heart for people.

Sunday, August 18, 2024

IV. A Disciple strives to "Gain Christ!"

Paul writes in Philippians 3:12, that he changed from accounting language to athletic language, saying that his goal was to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ had in mind for him. This goal absorbed all of Paul's energy. We should not let anything take our eyes off our goal of knowing Christ. Like the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, we must lay aside everything harmful and forsake anything that may distract us from being effective disciples.

Sunday, August 25, 2024

V. A Disciple Presses On!

A disciple is never satisfied with past victories. Paul said, "but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12b, NIV)

"Pressing On" is a hunting term meaning to chase or hunt down. Paul was willing to press on to take hold of the goal – living and working for Christ, because of what Christ had done for him. Christ laid hold of Paul so that Paul could lay hold of the prize, knowing Christ completely.

In verse 13, is the attitude that will gain maturity!

Paul pressed on toward the goal, toward God's purpose in Christ Jesus (vs. 14). Paul provides his own conclusion in Philippians 3:15-17, keeping his mind on growing and maturing in Christ, just as we must keep our minds on growing and maturing in Christ as well.

Paul focused his life on being like Christ and we all must do the same. Paul, telling people to follow his example is a testimony to his character. Are you able to do the same? What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she imitated you?