

Christlikeness: The Goal of Discipleship

Scripture: Matthew 10:24–25

Code: 2281

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 10:24-25 says, "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" That reflects on the fundamental responsibility of the church as stated by our Lord Jesus Christ: "Go ... and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them ... [and] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20, NASB). Matthew 10 contains Jesus' instructions on what it means to be His disciple.

The Greek word translated "disciple" (mathetes) means "learner." Jesus taught a group of twelve disciples. He helped them to mature spiritually so they could teach others and advance the Kingdom. That is the process we are in. The commission of the church involves more than leading people to Jesus Christ. We're to equip "the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). The church is to produce mature disciples who can in turn reproduce themselves.

A. The Responsibility of Leadership

Producing mature disciples was the Lord's task when He was on earth, and was also the task of the apostles. In fact the apostle Paul said repeatedly that his great desire was to bring the saints to maturity (1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Col. 4:12). It is the task of all who are called into Christian leadership.

1. A commitment to God's calling

I know God has called me to teach the Word to help mature the saints. I am accountable to fulfill that calling to the extent possible in the power of the Holy Spirit. That means I must be committed to fighting my weaknesses so that the task God has given me is accomplished. Are You Tuned In? One problem Christian leaders face is whether people are listening when they are taught. The Lord Jesus Christ faced that problem. He knew what His task was and how to communicate the truth, but He sought open hearts to receive it.

Teaching God's truth is like a radio program--it's one thing to broadcast and something else to have an attentive audience. For preaching and teaching to be effective, someone has to be tuned in to the message. The "Grace to You" broadcast goes out all over America and the world, but of all those who could hear, relatively few take advantage of their opportunity to tune in. All too often that's how it is in the church--a lot of broadcasting is going on but only a few are tuned in.

2. A commitment to God's will

The leadership in a church must be committed to doing God's will as revealed in the Bible. That should be a commitment not only of leadership, but also of those being led. Often the reason for not finding that kind of commitment is that the church doesn't really understand what it means to be a Christian or a disciple of Jesus Christ.

3. A commitment to seek disciples

When Jesus called His disciples He carefully warned them about what they would face. That means halfhearted people were discouraged from following Him. He used metaphors like the narrow gate and the narrow way (Matt. 7:13-14) to separate from Himself those who weren't willing to pay the price of commitment to Him. The challenge to the Lord, His apostles, and ministers today is the

same: find people who are willing and eager to respond in obedience to God's Word no matter what the price.

4. A commitment to follow Christ

True discipleship means that a person commits himself to follow Jesus Christ for life. You may have wondered about the necessity of dedication in the Christian walk. Many have gone to a church and seen someone give an altar call where people go to the front of the church and dedicate, rededicate, consecrate, reconsecrate, commit, or recommit their lives to Christ. The essence of dedication, commitment, or consecration to Christ--to be set apart or sanctified in Him--is what Matthew 10:24-42 is all about.

5. A commitment to learn and teach the essentials

Jesus' teachings on discipleship in Matthew 10:24-42 are essential truths of the faith. We know that because our Lord repeated them many times (e.g., Matt. 16:24-25; Luke 14:26-35; John 8:31; 12:26; 15:1-16:4). Good Bible teachers come to recognize certain essential truths in Scripture. Through study and experience those teachers find concise and effective ways to communicate those basics so that they are understandable. Once in awhile you may hear the same terminology, illustrations, concepts, and expressions used because they have been tested for effectiveness.

Redaction Criticism: No Repetition Allowed

So called "redaction critics" believe Matthew wasn't a writer who recorded what Jesus actually said to His disciples, but an editor who sorted and condensed from Jesus' teachings given at different times. They essentially accuse him of misrepresenting the material as one speech by the Lord Jesus Christ.

One reason they give for that view is the material in Matthew 10 is found elsewhere in the gospels. Redaction critics are unwilling to allow for repetition as a valid teaching method employed by Jesus. But it is more reasonable to conclude that like any other teacher, Jesus taught the same truths in different places and circumstances. While He varied His terminology according to the situation, he taught the same essential principles.

Redaction criticism destroys the integrity of Matthew, taints the authority of Jesus' recorded teachings, and denies that Jesus had the right to repeat Himself as occasion warranted. Yet Scripture says we learn "precept upon precept; line upon line" (Isa. 28:10). Jesus taught the essential truths of the gospel many times, and one of His favorite subjects was discipleship.

C. The Response of Past Disciples

Those who properly respond to the truths of Matthew 10:24-42 are the kind of people God uses to change the course of history.

1. Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale, the nineteenth-century nursing pioneer, wrote in her diary, "To-day I am 30--the age Christ began His mission. Now no more childish things.... Now Lord let me think only of thy will" (Cecil Woodham-Smith, Florence Nightingale [N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1951], p. 53). She had the reputation of keeping nothing back from God. Keeping nothing back is what the Lord spoke of in Matthew 10.

2. Jim Elliot

Jim Elliot, missionary to the Auca Indians in Ecuador, wrote in his diary, "God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn up for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus" (Elisabeth Elliot, Shadow of the Almighty [N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1958], p. 55). That's exactly what he got--in the flower of his youth an Auca Indian threw a spear through him.

3. Jonathan Edwards

God mightily used the eighteenth-century American pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards because he was willing to pay the price of true discipleship. In his memoirs he wrote, "I have been before God, and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God; so that I am not, in any respect,

my own. I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections, which are in me. Neither have I any right to this body, or any of its members--no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet; no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell, or this taste. I have given myself clear away, and have not retained any thing as my own....

"I have been this morning to him, and told him, that I gave myself wholly to him. I have given every power to him; so that, for the future, I'll challenge no right in myself, in no respect whatever. I have expressly promised him, and I do now promise Almighty God, that by his grace I will not. I have this morning told him that I take him for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, not acting as if it were; and his law, for the constant rule of my obedience; and would fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life; and that I did believe in Jesus Christ, and did receive him as a Prince and Savior; and that I would adhere to the faith and obedience of the gospel, however hazardous and difficult the confession and practice of it may be....

"I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication, and to receive me now as entirely his own, and to deal with me, in all respects, as such, whether he afflicts me or prospers me, or whatever he pleases to do with me, who am his.

"Now, henceforth, I am not to act, in any respect, as my own.--I shall act as my own, if I ever make use of any of my powers to do any thing that is not to the glory of God, and do not make the glorifying of him my whole and entire business:--if I murmur in the least at affliction; if I grieve at the prosperity of others; if I am in any way uncharitable; if I am angry because injuries; if I revenge them; if I do any thing purely to please myself, or avoid any thing for the sake of my own ease; if I omit any thing because it is great self-denial; if I trust to myself; if I take any of the praise of the good that I do, or that God doth by me; or if I am in any way proud" (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974], p. xxv). Edwards was a man who belonged absolutely to God.

LESSON

I. A Disciple Is a Follower of Christ (v. 24)

"The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord."

A. He claims a relationship

The twelve apostles were the immediate primary audience for Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10. They were to be sent out for a short time of ministry to prepare them for final commissioning after the resurrection. But in verse 23 Jesus refers to those who would minister "till the son of man [returns]"--the second coming. So the Lord's teaching telescopes out to encompass all who would ever follow Him. That broad audience is also addressed in Matthew 10:24-42.

Jesus' use of the word "disciple" in verse 24 emphasizes the broad scope of His audience. The twelve apostles had been named and trained prior to verse 24 (vv. 1-15). But from verse 24 on Christ used the terms "disciple" (vv. 24-25, 42), "slave" (vv. 24-25), "everyone" (v. 32), "whoever" (vv. 33, 42), and "He who" (vv. 37-41), to emphasize the learning process that applies to anyone who claims a relationship to Jesus Christ at any time.

B. He counts the cost

Jesus broadened the extent of His audience as He explained what it meant to be His disciple. He made a point of presenting the cost of discipleship right up front. We don't do anyone a favor by trying to get him or her to "make a decision" for Christ apart from understanding what belonging to Christ will cost. Many false believers come into the church because they were never presented with the cost of discipleship.

1. John 6:53-66--"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Jesus meant that His followers must accept His sacrifice on their behalf for salvation--but many would not accept

that.

2. Matthew 8:19-20--"A certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee wherever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The text implies the man left--he apparently wasn't willing to be deprived of earthly comforts.

3. Matthew 8:21-22--"Another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." That man wanted to wait until his father died and he received his inheritance. Evidently that disciple stopped following Jesus.

4. Luke 9:61-62--"Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Jesus meant that discipleship for him would sever family ties.

The way that leads to eternal life is narrow (Matt. 7:13-14). There is a cost. That's the way the Lord always presented discipleship. Theological Hash?

Matthew's record of Jesus' teaching is so clear and logical that it's hard to understand why redaction critics say it is but a hodgepodge of unassociated sayings. They say the same thing about the Sermon on the Mount. Supposedly Matthew took various sayings of Jesus and made it look like Jesus spoke it all at one time--a theological hash without any logical pattern. But that approach fails to see the logical flow and genius of Jesus' teaching as recorded by Matthew. Matthew 10 clearly tells how to minister (vv. 5-15), what kind of reactions to expect (vv. 18-23), and the cost of discipleship (vv. 24-42). That's not theological hash; it's a logical progression.

II. A Disciple Is Treated Like Christ (v. 24)

"The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord."

A. Because He Is Associated with His Teacher

By the time Jesus reached verse 24 in His teaching, the apostles had been told they would be sheep among wolves (v. 16), scourged (v. 17), dragged before pagan courts (v. 18), persecuted by their own families (v. 21), hated by all (v. 22), and kept running from city to city (v. 23). So in verse 24 Jesus begins His teaching on the cost of discipleship with two examples: "a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master" (NASB). Jesus' disciples were not to expect to be treated differently. That's an axiomatic part of a relationship to Christ (cf. Luke 6:40).

1. A student/teacher relationship

Students learn what their teachers tell them. That's a role they take by choice. Since they are placing themselves under their teacher's instruction, they obviously can't be above their teacher.

2. A slave/master relationship

A slave is chosen--bought--by his master. He has no choice--he must obey. The master is always above his slave.

Subservience to Christ as Lord is the point of Jesus' examples. Students obey according to their choice of position and slaves obey by the compulsion of their position. We choose to be disciples and learn at the feet of Jesus, but first He sovereignly chose us to be His slaves.

B. Because He Acts Like His Teacher

1. Luke 6:40--"A pupil [disciple] is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (NASB).

2. 1 John 2:6--"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

3. Colossians 3:16--"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." We are to be dominated by Christ's Word so we become like Him.

4. Matthew 10:27--Jesus said, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light." We say what He said. We have no other message than Christ's Word.

5. 1 John 3:2--"When [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The goal of all Christian life is conformity to Christ's likeness. The result is that the world will treat Christians like it treated Christ. The disciples of a persecuted teacher will also be persecuted. A person who is increasingly like Christ will be treated increasingly like Him. In Matthew 10:24 Jesus clearly tells us that if we aren't willing to come to Him on those terms, we are not a part of Him.

III. A Disciple Is Content to Be Like Christ (v. 25)

"It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" A true disciple is content to be like his teacher, just like a true slave is content to be like his lord. The Greek word translated "enough" (arketos) means "sufficient." Disciples of Christ don't try to escape what their Lord couldn't escape. It is sufficient for them to live like and be treated like Him. Paul's prayer was that he would truly know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). He didn't ask to be loved by the world, be famous, or be accepted. Rather he knew that to be successful in pursuing Christ involves knowing and experiencing how He was treated. A number of times Jesus was said to be working for the devil (cf. Matt. 9:34; 12:24). Since He ("the master of the house") was called the devil ("Beelzebub"), His disciples ("them of his household") could certainly expect to be called the same thing.

CONCLUSION

Believers must be willing to pay the cost of being conformed to Christ, which is the goal of all discipleship. That means the followers of Christ will be treated like their master. Our Lord was very clear about that.

A. John 13:16

"The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

B. John 15:18-21

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

C. John 16:2

"The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

Yet in spite of the world's treatment, God moves the hearts of people to redeem them. Many of us became Christians through what we saw in the life of a believer. The joy, peace, freedom from guilt, sense of forgiveness, and hope of eternal life are attractive to those God calls to Himself, while at the same time they are distasteful to a world system that hates Christ. That's the price of discipleship.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the fundamental responsibility of the church (Matt. 28:19-20)?
2. Producing mature _____ was the Lord's task when He was on earth.
3. What does the Greek word translated "disciple" (mathetes) mean?
4. According to Ephesians 4:12, what process takes place in the church?
5. What is the task of all who are called into Christian leadership?
6. How is teaching God's truth like a radio program? What does that mean?
7. What kinds of commitment are leaders in the church called to? Summarize each kind.
8. What does redaction criticism do?

9. What characterizes those who properly respond to the truths of Matthew 10:24-42?
10. Who was the primary audience for Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10?
11. Is Christ's teaching in Matthew 10:24-42 to a broad or narrow audience? Explain.
12. Many false believers come into the church because they were never presented with the _____ of discipleship.
13. The way that leads to _____ is narrow.
14. Discuss the progression of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10.
15. What will association with Christ result in?
16. The goal of all Christian life is conformity to _____.
17. What will happen to a person who is increasingly like Christ?
18. What is a true disciple content to be? Explain.
19. What did the pursuit of Christ mean to Paul?
20. What did Jesus say His disciples could expect to be called? Why (Matt. 10:25)?

Pondering the Principles

1. The leadership of the church is to be committed: committed to God's call, God's will, seeking disciples, and teaching the essentials of the faith. But such commitments can be fulfilled with joy only when coming from a transformed heart. The English hymnwriter Isaac Watts, writing to Christian ministers, said, "Call your own soul often to account; examine the temper, the frame, and the motions of your heart with all holy severity, so that the evidences of your faith in Jesus, and your repentance for sin, and your conversion to God, be many and fair, be strong and unquestionable; that you may walk on with courage and joyful hope toward heaven, and lead on the flock of Christ thither with holy assurance and joy" (cited in *The Christian Ministry; or Excitement and Direction in Ministerial Duties*, Extracted from Various Authors, edited by William Innes [Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1824], pp. 92-93). If you are in Christian leadership, are you constantly making sure of your own transformation as you seek transformation in others?
2. The American evangelist Vance Havner said, "Christianity is not a happiness cult; it is not a success cult. At heart it is the process by which God makes saints out of sinners. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. We are not on a glorified picnic, a sanctified hayride. We are afflicted nowadays with a cheap Christianity, a kind of religious popcorn diet--no cross, no discipline! We receive the Word with joy, but we have no root nor depth and are soon offended. There are too many religious hoboes trying to go to heaven as cheaply as possible, with just enough prayer, Bible reading, and service to get by. Such lives will go up in smoke at the judgment" (*Why Not Just Be Christians* [Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1964], pp. 28-29). Are you seeking worldly happiness or God's glory?

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