

Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

TRANSFORMATION and MULTIPLICATION

Mark 3:14

April 09, 2022

A disciple is more than one who acquires information from someone who is smarter or more knowledgeable than they. There is the idea of relationship/community/intimacy. A disciple **"adheres to"** - holds fast to, clings to, bonds to, is attached to, is faithful to - the teacher.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the concept of discipleship was well and truly established:

- John the Baptist had disciples who gave up the comforts of civilization in order to follow him in the wilderness.
- The Essenes had disciples even though the entrance requirements were extensive and demanding.
- The Zealots had disciples.
- The Pharisees sponsored a formal rabbinical school and the great teacher Gamaliel reportedly had a thousand disciples who spent their time mastering Torah.

A young man who had reached a certain level of academic or social standing could join any number of rabbinical schools all led by a teacher {**Rabbi**} thus becoming a disciple of that teacher:

- Memorizing the teacher's words for the express purpose of passing the information to another.
- Learning how the teacher observed the law and traditions as well as how he taught others to do as he did.
- After learning all that he could, it was expected that the disciple would go out and establish a school making disciples of his own.

A disciples greatest calling and highest honor was to imitate his teacher and it is this level of commitment that lies at the heart of - is the ultimate goal of - the transformational and multiplical {**it's a word now ☺**} process of Jesus driven discipleship:

- **Jesus chose raw recruits who had not been taught in the rabbinical schools.**
 - **Matthew 4:18-22** - And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. ²¹ And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²² And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.
- **They learned from Him: His character - His words - His ministry style - and they were transformed.**
 - **Matthew 5:1-2** - And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² And opening His mouth He *began* to teach them....
 - **Matthew 9:10** - And it happened that as He was reclining *at the table* in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.
 - **Matthew 9:35-38** - And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ³⁶ And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
 - **Matthew 15:32** - And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."
 - **Matthew 23:13-39** - But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.
 - **Acts 4:13** - Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.
- **They were attached to Him.**
 - **Matthew 19:27** - Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You...."
 - **John 6:67-69** - Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ "And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."
 - **John 15:4-5** - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- **They went and found then mentored/taught others in what they had learned. Not for the purpose of making their own disciples, but in order to make more disciples for Jesus.**
 - **Mark 3:14** - And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach....
 - **Acts 1:8** - but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
 - **James 1:1** - James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.
 - **1 Peter 1:1-2** - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.
 - **1 John 1:1-3** - What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life -- ² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us -- ³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, **"Make disciples** {people who hold fast to, cling to, bond to, are attached to, are faithful to HIM} **FIRST then baptize them"** (Matt. 28:19)

Fast forward 2000 years.....

We say, **"Baptizes them and HOPEFULLY they'll figure the rest out later."**

I remember, as a small girl, going with my parents to one evangelistic series after another. It was the popular and expected thing to do. You supported the evangelist and if you went enough times..... you'd get a new Bible!!!

I remember the rush of emotion.

I remember all the baptisms and **"new believers"**.

As I grew up, however, I began to realize that these evangelistic events didn't produce anything particularly long-lasting. You'd see some new faces at church for a while, but slowly most would fade away.

More often than not, it was whispered that they left because they didn't really believe - they were the ones with the problem - but the truth is, most denominations have a short-sighted view of conversion ----

- A relationship with Jesus has been replaced with adherence to a set of doctrines with little to no expectation for a transformed life. You believe the Doctrines of the church? In the tank you go!
- The congregation is given little or takes little responsibility when it comes to the nurturing and mentoring of new believers.

The results have been catastrophic to the cause of Christ.

In the today's churches you will find many groups {this list is not exhaustive}:

- The **"faithful, yet over-worked"** group. They carry the church. They have multiple jobs, which they do faithfully, but not joyfully. Church is an all-consuming drudgery. They show up week after week, perhaps out of guilt, perhaps out of habit, perhaps out of a sense of responsibility, but rarely out of love. They are not invested in their own spiritual growth or in anyone else's spiritual growth - too busy.
- The **"not sure why I'm here"** group. They go to church because mom and dad make them. They go to church because that's where their friends are. They go to church because it's habit.... But they are not sure if they even really believe. They often arrive late and leave early. They don't feel any different when they walk out the church doors than when they walked in. They are not invested in their own spiritual growth or in anyone else's spiritual growth - just don't care.
- The **"pew potato"** group. They are not engaged in the community, except for the free food. They are only willing to experience church on their terms. They are content to sit in the pew. They expect a lot and are quick to complain, but they contribute nothing. They are not invested in their own spiritual growth or anyone else's spiritual growth - too much effort required.
- The **"looks like a disciple"** group. They appear to be just a little bit holier than the rest of us. They know all the words in the Hymnal. They interact in Sabbath School. They are evangelical when it comes to their personal choice of diet. They pay tithe and kill it in Bible Trivia. They are full of **"helpful"** suggestions, but they are also critical and judgmental. The institution of church is everything and they pride themselves on being the **"keepers of doctrine"**. They love church!! BUT loving church and loving Jesus are not the same thing. This group is content with its own spiritual condition and doesn't care about anyone else's.
- The final group, the **"True Seekers"**, is in the minority. They long for a deeper transformational relationship with Jesus, but unfortunately, the programs, meetings and Ra! Ra! Sessions have left them empty, but they keep hoping!!! They care very deeply about their own spiritual growth and the growth of others, but they have no idea where to even start.

Church leaders don't openly promote discipleship as the process of **FOLLOWING JESUS** for **YOUR ENTIRE LIFE** because they don't know anything about discipleship.

OR

They know what it means, but they don't want to pay the high cost of actually following Jesus and are reluctant to ask their congregation to do something they, themselves are unwilling to do.

OR

They're afraid they'll lose members if they push the high requirements of discipleship.

So, they replace life with Jesus with church activity:

- Another evangelistic series? YES!
- A more inviting foyer with a coffee bar and bagel stand? YES!
- Monthly fasting? YES!
- A "Cook your way to a better life" program? YES!
- A "How to improve your....." group study? YES!
- A "How to reach our community" focus group? YES!
- More events? YES!
- More programs? YES!

There are lots of reason why people go to church, but if you're not going there to meet Jesus - to get to know Him better and allow Him to transform your life - and, along the way, encourage your fellow Christians, then you're going for the wrong reasons.

Before I start to getting nasty-grams.....

Is church community important? Yes. Vital, I would say, but going to church, with all that it implies, or attachment to a certain denomination **≠** a relationship with - attachment to - love for Jesus.

Cool snack bars or energetic worship bands or programs to *"improve your life"* do not create lasting transformation in the Christian life.

Only discipleship - **holding fast to, clinging to, bonding to, attaching yourself to, being faithful to**, walking down the road with **JESUS** does that.

When life with Jesus becomes the most important item on a churches agenda, the life of the body will change and when you apply math = 2 disciples go out and make 4 disciples who go out and make 8 disciples who go out and make 16 disciples..... pretty soon you will have a group of people who are learning and growing and becoming more and more like Jesus who can't wait to share it all with someone new.

This is the ultimate result of **JESUS DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP** - transformation and multiplication.

Mark 3:14 - And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach....