

Discipleship

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Salt and Light Ministries

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Foreword

“What is hidden in the roots will be revealed in the shoots.”

This has been one of the lifelong principles by which I have sought to live and build. Experience tells us that what the roots of the plant are like, and what they feed on, determines what sort of fruit grows; where the foundations of a building are shaky, time and disaster will reveal it; where the most simple flaws are not spotted, dreadful disasters can follow – as when a basic defect in the fuel system of the Challenger space craft cost the lives of seven brave astronauts.

So it is with people. What we believe in our hearts will eventually determine how we live, how we build and what we end up with.

This “Roots and Shoots” series is not so much an attempt to define the distinctives of our family of churches, but rather to ensure that all our beliefs and practices are firmly rooted in the Scriptures.

Many people have asked us over the years: “Who are you and what do you believe?” While our structure may appear to be somewhat nebulous, nevertheless the understanding of our common beliefs needs to be clear and unambiguous.

We are a family of churches that believe we are to be “sons of the kingdom” sown into God’s earth. The key that transforms “the word of the kingdom” into “sons of the kingdom” is *understanding* (Matthew 13:23). In the Lord’s first parable of the kingdom (the Sower), the ‘word’ of the kingdom – the seed – when properly received and understood produces fruit. In the second parable of the kingdom (the Weeds), we discover that the fruit has become the seed, and that the seed is “the sons of the kingdom”. The word, bearing fruit, producing seed as sons of the kingdom, planted in the world! That is our prayer for this series of books.

Barney Coombs

Introduction

One of the issues that has made a deep impact on my life has been *Discipleship*. I have benefited immensely from it and have been discipled by various people at different times. They have moulded my values, my outlook and, in a great way, simply helped to change me. People like my Sunday school teachers, Mr. P. P. John and Mr. S. K. Alfred, and my pastor at Bombay Baptist Church, Mr. Charles Lazaro; but perhaps most significantly, brothers from the ‘Salt and Light’ family of churches, into whose circle I was drawn many years ago now through meeting Vic Gledhill. Vic has mentored me, and has had major input into both the life and ministry of myself and my wife, Esme, and the churches that we now lead across the city and the nation of India. Whatever they and we now are, is in great measure due to him and the discipleship he gave me.

But others too have contributed in this process. Men like Barney Coombs, Steve Thomas, Bob Mumford, and Charles Simpson, whose rich input has added to this compilation of truths that has been precious to us over the years. Magazines such as ‘New Wine’ and ‘Restoration’ have also contributed their part, not to forget the numerous discussion with various leaders within my own church and in the city.

As our churches began to grow, I wanted to ensure that this teaching on ‘Discipleship’ was perpetuated. I began looking for a workbook that could be studied by all our satellite churches, but I could find none. I knew it meant that I would have to write one myself. And so I began to gather material from various places and found some very useful notes by Mark Mumford and Aled Griffith from East Midlands Christian Fellowship in the UK. Any of you who have sat under their excellent lectures on discipleship will immediately recognise whole chunks of material used in this book, and I am grateful to them for giving me permission to reproduce extracts from them.

A copy of my completed discipleship manual reached the editor's desk at a timely moment, and it was decided that this should be turned into a book for our *Roots and Shoots* series. Actually I gather that the original plan was for Mark Mumford to have written this booklet in this series, but the plan got changed. (After all, why keep re-inventing the wheel?) The material's presentation in its present format, however, is in no small measure thanks to Mike Beaumont, who did some very substantial re-writing of the material to make it suitable for a Roots and Shoots booklet. How wonderful it is to be part of a family!

So in a funny sort of way, the process by which this booklet has come into being sums up who we are: *family!* The principles in this booklet are not mine, or Mark's or Vic's, but *ours*. They are truths that we rediscovered in the early days of this family gathering together; they are truths that have helped make us, for better or for worse, into the leaders we are; they are truths that Jesus designed for his church two thousand years ago and that somehow got lost on the way; they are truths that we long to see imparted to the next generation; they are truths for both East and West.

My challenge – our challenge – to you as you read this booklet, therefore, is this: to resolve that by the end of it you will either be a *disciple* or a *discipler*. There is simply no room for anything in between.

Chapter 1

Introduction to Discipleship

What are you?

When asked what you ‘are’ in connection with your faith, I wonder how you answer? For most of us, the answer would be, “I’m a Christian.” Yet that description is found in the New Testament just three times! Others might describe themselves as “believers”. But even this word is used quite seldom in the New Testament (and even then, it is often as a verb rather than a noun). The word the New Testament consistently uses of us is ‘*disciple*’ – found an amazing 282 times. Something seems to have slipped in our thinking!

While we are so familiar with those final words that Jesus left ringing in his followers’ ears before he returned to the Father – “ ... go and make *disciples* ... ” (Matthew 28:19) – we have somehow settled over the years for reducing it to mean ‘Go and make converts’ or ‘Go and make believers’. But Jesus called us, not to engage in ‘*decision-making*’, but ‘*disciple-making*’. To restore the church to this sort of Biblical perspective and strength is going to demand a major readjustment in our thinking and our strategy.

So, before we go any further, why not stop and ask yourself: what about me? What have I settled for (in reality, not in theory!)? Have I really grasped the significance of the difference, and is that reflected in how I work it out? What *am* I?

A Definition of Discipleship

Over the years, I have picked up a number of definitions of discipleship. Here are just some of them.

“Discipleship is training a follower who has come under discipline for the purpose of instruction, in order to produce maturity and ministry.”

“Christian discipleship is a teacher-student relationship, based on the model of Christ and his disciples, in which the teacher reproduces the fullness of life he has in Christ in the students as well, that the student is able to train others to teach others.”

“Discipleship is the yoking of one immature to one more mature person, as an effective means of impartation and learning.”

“Discipleship is the process of being led into maturity within a secure relationship concerning the totality of life.”

“Discipleship is a process of turning aliens and immigrants into solid citizens of the Kingdom of God. It is similar to the apprenticeship practised in the trades and arts where skills are developed under the supervision of a Master Craftsman.”

There are no doubt many other definitions; but from these few, the key aspects of discipleship are clear: *training*, *discipline*, and *relationship*, in order to bring about *maturity* and *fruitfulness*. Discipleship has nothing to do with running someone else’s life or making decisions for them (a mark of *im*-maturity if ever there was one!). Rather, it is all about one person sharing and imparting the life of Jesus that they themselves have found, in a way that the person being trained can find that life for themselves and in turn pass it on to, and train, others.

This is why, at every stage of my Christian life, I should be in one category or another; I am meant to be either *disciplining* or *disciplined*. I am certainly not meant to be just ‘a Christian’.

The Uniqueness of Christian Discipleship

Discipleship – a way of life

Disciples were a common feature of everyday life in New Testament times. John the Baptist had disciples (Matt 11:2-3); the Pharisees and Sadducees had disciples (Mark 2:18); the Jews saw themselves as disciples of Moses (John 9:28); Theudas, an insurgent leader, had four hundred disciples (Acts 5:36); and every Rabbi (Jewish teacher) had his circle of disciples who would come to him to learn (John 3:2).

Such discipleship normally involved one of three aspects: it was religious or philosophical; or it was political and revolutionary; or it was practice- or skill-orientated. But in every case, it was about passing on skills or knowledge so that the next generation could continue ‘the cause’.

In one sense then, Jesus was doing nothing unusual in training disciples; yet in another, his practice was so different.

The distinctives of Jesus

As we look at how Jesus went about his discipling of others, a number of things stand out:

1. He chose his disciples

Usually disciples sought out a teacher and asked to be ‘attached’ to him; but with Jesus, it was the other way round. He chose them before they could choose him – and sometimes the call came quite out of the blue! With Peter and Andrew it happened while they were busy with their fishing business (Matt 4:18-20); with Matthew it happened while he was sitting at his tax collector’s desk (Matt 9:9). While many gathered around him out of interest, disciples were those he called. That is why he could say to them, “You did not choose me, but *I chose you ...*” (John 15:16).

2. His discipleship teachings were radical and unpredictable

Most discipleship was safe and predictable, following along well-worn tracks of those who had gone before. If you asked a Jewish rabbi for advice, for example, he would respond by giving you a long list of what Rabbi So-and-So said on the one hand, but what Rabbi This-and-That said on the other.

But Jesus' teachings were often quite radical and cut through traditions with answers that were often not expected. For example: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt 5:27-28)

3. *His teaching carried authority and power*

Teaching, in itself, can be 'safe'. But Jesus did not keep his teaching 'safe'; he performed miracles to back it up. A classic example is when, early in his ministry, he healed the paralysed man to prove he could forgive his sins (Mark 2:1-12). But then, amazingly, as they were trained, he sent out his disciples to do the same! (See, for example, Luke 9:1-6)

4. *He dealt with people individually as well as corporately*

Jesus was as happy to disciple the one's (Matt 18:21) or two's (Luke 24:13-15) or three's (Mark 9:2) or twelve's (Matt 11:1), as he was to teach whole crowds (Matt 7:28-29). He did not need to wait for a crowd to feel his discipling was worthwhile.

5. *His discipleship was for a fixed period of time*

Jesus did not keep his followers permanently fixed in a position of lowly learner to the 'Great Master'. He spent a relatively short period of time discipling them before releasing them on the world to do the same to others (Matt 28:18-20). He initially said, "Come and follow me", and just three years later, "Go and make disciples". And his expectation was that they would go on to do "even greater things" (John 14:12)!

6. *His discipleship worked from the inside out*

He did not start with the externals, but worked at liberating people from within, dealing with the spiritual bondages on the inside before dealing with issues on the outside. This contrasted strongly with the practice of the Pharisees, whose major focus was on 'what showed' (Matt 23:25-26).

7. *His disciples were ordinary people*

No special qualifications were needed to be discipled by Jesus – other than a teachable heart. Where other disciplers might have certain pre-requisites

for their pupils, Jesus had none; where others charged for their teaching, he gave it for free. Perhaps this is part of the reason why “the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:37, KJV)

So, What are You?

Jesus is looking for disciples, not followers and not Christians. And his discipleship has dimensions that sets it apart from every other process of training in the world. It is to this that he calls us all – either as *discipler* or *discipled*. So let us turn now to look at more of what that discipleship entails.

Chapter 2

The Attributes of a Disciple

So, what is a disciple meant to be? There are at least seven different attributes that describe the disciple in the New Testament.

1. A Follower

First, a disciple must be a *follower*. This ‘following’ aspect is one of the first things to come out as Jesus called those first disciples.

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, *follow me*,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and *followed* him.” (Matt 4:18-20)

For the leaders of the early church, too, following was a key. “*Follow* my example, as I *follow* the example of Christ,” wrote Paul (1 Cor 11:1). And again, “For you yourselves know how you ought to *follow* our example.” (2 Thess 3:7) For disciple and discipler this brings a huge challenge!

The Greek word in the New Testament for ‘follower’ comes from the verb *akoloutheo*, which means to follow, go the same way, or imitate. The fact that the New Testament generally uses the verb rather than the noun (in other words, it generally speaks of ‘one who does the following’ rather than ‘a follower’) shows that the stress was on the *doing* of this rather than the *being* of it – in other words, doing it, not thinking about it! *A follower by nature is not someone who has a theory of following, but who simply gets on with it and follows!*

Such is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The disciple can follow and be led; the disciple can lay down his fishing nets or his gathered taxes, or whatever else he has set his hands to, and follow, without being defensive, proud or independent, or setting out conditions first.

2. **A Learner**

The second attribute of a disciple follows on from the first. The disciple follows in order to *learn*. In fact, the Greek word for ‘disciple’ comes from a verb that means *to learn*.

Jesus once put it like this: “*Come to me* (i.e. follow), all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

The disciple needs to accept that there are things that he or she needs to *learn* – first and foremost from Jesus, but also from those more mature in the faith that Jesus provides for us. One who approaches life as a learner benefits from every situation and every encounter. He is the one who can draw life and see wisdom.

There are three ways in which we can learn:

a) *Enquiring*

This is what Nicodemus did when he came to Jesus one night full of questions (John 3:2,4,9). He was learning by enquiring. This is what a group of unknown Greeks did in John 12:21 when they came and said, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus” (which really translates better as, “We would like an interview with Jesus.”) This is what the disciples did when they wanted to know why Jesus always taught in parables (Matt 13:10).

In my own life much of what I have grown in has come through enquiring. I can still remember the first time that Vic Gledhill and Steve Thomas sat in my flat above Bombay Baptist Church as I plied them with my questions about the Kingdom. Sometimes I feel I have tired them out by my continuous enquiring.

b) Observing

This involves watching and making a mental judgement, but from a distance. If we are honest, this is sometimes how we begin to grow and change – especially when new or strange things are going on. It is not that we are opposed or antagonistic; we sometimes just need space to watch as the first step in growing in that area. This was perhaps how Zacchaeus felt when he climbed up his tree because he “wanted to see who Jesus was” – although Jesus was not prepared to leave him there! (Luke 19:1-6)

We do need to note here that, without an opportunity to discuss or clarify things, observing from a distance can sometimes lead us to draw a wrong conclusion, and can result in negative discipleship. A classic example of this in the New Testament is the Pharisees, who always watched from a safe distance – near enough to criticise, but not near enough to learn!

The best sort of observing is that which takes place close up – like when the Twelve watched Jesus at close quarters as he prayed for people and healed them, before being sent out to do it themselves. Mark tells us that Jesus “appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might *be with him* and that he might send them out to preach ...” (Mark 2:14).

Take every opportunity you can to be with more mature Christians and leaders in the church, in all sorts of circumstances – life as well as ministry. It will be amazing how much you will learn if you simply *observe*!

c) Suffering

This is an aspect of learning that few of us like – but it is thoroughly Biblical! The Bible tells us about Jesus that, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.” (Hebrew 5:8) Paul, on his first apostolic trip, and as part of his “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them”, taught them that, “We must go through many *hardships* to enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22)

Suffering can be one of God’s greatest training grounds. While most of us prefer the easy times and the times of blessing, if we are honest, the blessings are often quickly forgotten. But it is often from the hard and painful times that we learn the most – about God, life and ourselves.

3. **An Adherent**

The word ‘adherent’ can sometimes be used rather disparagingly in the English language – ‘he is only an adherent to the cause; his heart is not really in it.’ But that is not the original sense of adherent, nor the sense in which I speak of it here. An adherent is one who has *joined* and is *committed*; he has chosen to *stick to it*. A disciple is someone who stays with it and sticks at it.

There are two things that an adherent can be committed to – a cause and a person. So it is for us. Our cause is *the Kingdom* – God’s rule over every part of our lives, despite its radical attitudes, appearance and demands. Our person is *Jesus the King* who lies at the heart of that Kingdom. Adherence to one demands adherence to the other. It is when the King brings the radical edge of his Kingdom to us that we truly see how much of an adherent we are.

Not everyone could respond to this radical Kingdom that the King brought. After a particularly challenging teaching session, John tells us that, “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” (John 6:66-68) The Twelve had decided they were adherents.

Those who left had no doubt been attracted earlier by the teaching and the miracles; those who stayed did so because they were yoked by spiritual joining. Such adherence or *joining* is a long-lasting relationship which helps us to get through. Still today, people see the value of discipleship as a committed relationship between two people which enables them to overcome the difficulties and the challenges. Commitment to a person will often prevent us from stumbling over some petty issue!

4. **A Hearer**

Biblically ‘hearing’ always implied ‘doing’. In fact, the very word for ‘hear’ in Hebrew (the language of the Old Testament) carried within it a sense of ‘hearing in order to do.’ It meant ‘to be attentive so you could act upon it’. Hence the repeated call to the churches in the Book of Revelation is “He who has an ear, let him hear.” There was no more obvious thing to do!

Sometimes our ‘hearing’ can have problems however. It can be dulled through things like –

Prejudices (traditional thoughts or bias towards a routine way of thinking – the Pharisees fitted wonderfully into this category, thereby excluding themselves from understanding Jesus’ teaching)

Preconceived ideas (that lead to responses like “I already know that”, thereby excluding us from the learning or discipleship process)

Assumption (thinking we knew what was meant or required without enquiring further and therefore failing to come up with what was really required or needed)

Counter proposals (words like “I have a better idea” or “Wouldn’t it be better if ... ?”)

All such attitudes hinder the discipleship process. That is why we need to have our hearing improved in the way that Isaiah discovered his hearing being improved. “The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, *wakens my ear to listen* like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has *opened my ears* (literally = ‘dug out my ears’), and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.” (Isaiah 50:4-5)

If our ears are ‘dug out’ and all the wax is cleaned up, then we will be able to hear the still small voice of the Lord, just like Elijah (I Kings 19:12-14) and young Samuel (I Samuel 3:1-21), and to act on it.

I have personally always found it a challenge to remember that my hearing ability is measured by the promptness of my obedience.

5. A Servant

In Matthew 10:24 Jesus says, “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” A disciple is both a *student* and a *servant*. The disciple is learning; but he is not learning in a vacuum or for the sake of it; he is *learning* in order *to do*, in order *to serve*.

So, what are some of the qualities of a servant that we should be looking to see develop in a disciple? Three things in particular strike me:

a) *Faithfulness*

Jesus teaches some basic principles of faithfulness in Luke 16:10-12. We have traditionally summed these up as follows:

i) *Faithful in little – faithful in much (v10)*

When I worked in a factory, I remember a colleague asking me for five Rupees and I gave it to him. He promised to return the money the next day; but he didn't. Then, some time later, he came and asked for more money, which he promised to return the next day. Of course, I refused him. If he had returned the money the previous time I would have surely trusted him with more. He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much; but if he is not faithful with little, he will never be trusted with more.

ii) *Faithful in worldly treasure – faithful in spiritual treasure (v11)*

One of our young men was once assigned to look after the overhead projector. On one occasion its special plug got damaged and a new one had to be purchased. This young brother agreed to get it fixed during the week. He completely forgot about it and remembered it only the following Sunday. He apologised and agreed to fix it during the coming week. Unfortunately he didn't. This went on for five weeks, and the congregation had to worship each Sunday without the OHP. Finally, in frustration, I arranged to fix the plug myself and assigned someone else to look after the OHP. Some months later, when we reshuffled the House Groups, I appointed new leaders. The young man in question was very upset that he was not made a leader even though he considered himself 'a senior' in the church. I had to tell him that if he was not faithful in handling 'things', how foolish it would be to ask him to look after 'people'. What would happen to them if he handled them the way he handled the OHP? He walked away disappointed and left the church. Years later he is still sitting on the sidelines of another church.

God sees it as highly important that we should be seen to be faithful in how we handle the resources he has given to us. If we do not look after what God has entrusted to us (whether our room, clothes, bike or car, or something we have responsibility for), or if we are always in debt or failing to control our expenditure, how on earth can we expect him to trust *real* treasure to us – the things that are 'out of this world'. This is why an important aspect of

discipleship concerns our money, possessions and responsibilities. If we want to keep this sphere outside of our discipleship, then we are closing the doors to a major area that God wants to use in training and preparing us for bigger and better things.

iii) Faithful with another's – faithful with your own (v12)

My previous pastor, Charles Lazaro, left for Australia for three years' training in Bible School. As associate pastor, I held the fort during his absence. During this period a few disgruntled people came to me and began to speak ill of him and, of course, to appreciate me. I rebuked them and told them never to slander the previous pastor in my presence. On another occasion I turned down what seemed a better offer of an alliance with someone else concerning the oversight of the church. I personally felt it would be 'illegal', as Charles Lazaro was the senior shepherd and I was only an assistant fulfilling his vision in his absence. Three year later Charles decided not to come back. It meant automatically I became the pastor. I had been "faithful with another's" and had been given my own.

If we cannot prove we are faithful in serving someone else's heart and vision, God will never be able to release to us our own. Practically, this means things like – looking for ways to serve in our Home Group if we believe God wants us to lead a Home Group one day; being happy to serve as the helper in a group if you feel called to be the leader of it one day; carrying the preacher's Bible for him as you accompany him to meetings if one day you hope to be preaching yourself.

All of these are wonderful discipleship opportunities – and great revealers of where our heart is truly at!

b) Humility

A second hallmark of a real servant is that he is humble. Humility is not greatly prized in our world today, where we are constantly told to 'fight for what is ours' and to 'stick up for ourselves'. Yet humility is a key feature of the Christian's life, and therefore a key aspect of discipleship.

Jesus himself set the example for us. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and *humble* in heart ..." (Matt 11:29). Paul wrote of him, "And being found in appearance as a man, he *humbled himself*

and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Php 2:8) Having set the example, Jesus then called us to it ourselves.

One day his disciples were arguing about “who was the greatest”. (Not even these disciples became perfect overnight!) “Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.’ He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.’ ” (Mark 9:33-37)

True discipleship will aim to produce Christ-like humility as a genuine aspect of servanthood. That is why discipleship is much more interested in the inner heart than the outward man.

c) *Single-mindedness*

A real servant has to be single-minded about who it is he is serving. If he is constantly looking over his shoulder and wondering about serving another, then he simply cannot give his best. Jesus put it quite starkly like this: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Luke 16:13)

Discipleship will look to help us settle the issue of who or what it is that we are truly serving.

Jesus set the pattern for the true servant. He is one who, when no one else will get up to wash feet, will do it himself (John 13:1-17). He will serve with faithfulness, single-mindedness and humility. Discipleship that excludes these dimensions is not the discipleship of the New Testament.

6. **An Imitator**

The final attribute that I want us to note is that of the *imitator* – not one we immediately think of when we think of discipleship perhaps, but nonetheless one that is thoroughly Biblical.

Paul, one of the greatest disciplers in the early church, urged the Corinthian church, “Therefore I urge you to *imitate* me.” (1 Cor 4:16) To the Thessalonian Church he wrote, “You became *imitators* of us and of the Lord

... ” (I Thess 1:6) and to the Philippian Church, “Join with others in following my example ... ” (Php 3:17).

To Timothy, one of the young men that he disciplined perhaps the most closely and effectively, he wrote: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13) A little later he adds, “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings ... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of ... ” (2 Tim 3:10-14). Elsewhere he challenges Timothy to rise to the same standard himself: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but *set an example* for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” (1 Tim 4:12)

Paul was constantly aware of the tremendous personal challenge of maintaining a lifestyle that was worth imitating. But in all integrity he could write to the Thessalonians: “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to *make ourselves a model for you to follow.*” (2 Thess 3:7-9)

All of this brings a tremendous challenge – to the one discipling no less than to the one being disciplined! For the discipler, it means rising to the challenge of living a lifestyle and carrying a ministry that gives new Christians something they *want* to have in their own life! For the one being disciplined, it means attaching yourself to someone, through the joining of God, whereby you are eager to pursue and develop similar characteristics in yourself – even if, at times, you get close enough to see some of the weaknesses too! (Although you don’t have to imitate these!) Remember: the closer you get to someone, the more you will see. So take care not to develop a despising heart! Keep pursuing and imitating the good you see, for we acquire the likeness of our heroes.

7. A Doer

A disciple can have all of these previous six things in his heart, but unless he has this last one in place, it is a waste of time; for he must also be a *doer*.

James 1:22-24 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do what it says*. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.” And Deuteronomy 6:1 (AV) says this: “And these are the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you, that ye may *do* them in the land ...”

How are you Doing?

So, how are you doing in each of these aspects of discipleship? Here’s a chart for you to find out. Rate yourself as a disciple on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means ‘not making any progress’ and 10 means ‘doing very well indeed’. Be honest with yourself – it’s an essential part of discipleship!

Follower	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Learner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Adherent	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hearer	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Servant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Imitator	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Doer	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Some Attitudes that can Hinder Discipleship

So, how did you do? The point is not how many 10’s you have (in fact, if they’re all 10’s you should be discipling others by now!), but to help you

see the *progress* that is being made – which is, after all, what discipleship is all about.

But perhaps you feel stuck in some areas. If so, it may be that some of the following hindrances are in the way and need dealing with.

a) Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism – seeing ourselves as good as or equal to someone else – can be a real hindrance to our growth. The Bible tells us: “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought ...” (Romans 12:3). In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus said that each servant was entrusted with property “according to his ability” (Matt 25:15). God loves us all equally; but he is not a Communist and does not operate according to our models of ‘fairness’ when it comes to giving gifts and opportunities. Even if God were to give all of us the same gift, the ‘measure’ of gift would be different.

When we start to think that we are as good as others, that we should be given the opportunities that others seem to have, etc., we need to be very careful. It was Lucifer who first claimed equality (and with God, at that!) and brought about his own ruin (Isaiah 14:12-15). The Bible makes clear that there are differing gifts, differing ministries, differing capacities and differing functions. We must accept these differences and enjoy the diversity it brings. We must not claim equality with others or seek for promotion, but wait until it is given to us. If this is not our heart posture, it will severely hinder the discipleship process.

b) Self-opinionation

Having an opinion is very different from being self-opinionated. The latter results from deep-rooted pride that sees its own viewpoint as the only valid one. This always proves to be a profound block to effective discipleship, for it produces an attitude that always sees itself as correct and is therefore unable to receive direction or correction from others.

c) Inability to receive discipline or correction

The writer of Hebrews says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:11) My own experience

tells me that the writer is correct! No discipline seems pleasant at the time! As yet no child (or adult!) has willingly or joyfully embraced discipline. Each one attempts to escape it. But I have seen over the years – both in my own life, as well as in raising up both natural and spiritual children – that it is a key issue in producing a harvest of righteousness and peace.

If we cannot receive discipline or correction, lovingly brought, we will never grow and mature in character or gifting. When we look at great men and women of God who move powerfully in some gift, it is easy to just think, “I wish I were like that!” But they didn’t just *get* like that; they were *trained* into it, often with as many tears as smiles.

This is why it is so important that *discipleship* is built on a foundation of relationship. We need to know that we are loved before we are pruned. But when we know we are loved, we can receive anything.

I’ll leave the final word on the matter with the writer of Proverbs: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.” (Prov 12:1)

Chapter 3

The Motivation for Discipleship

There are some very basic and good reasons why discipleship should have such a high priority among us, and it is to these that we now turn in this chapter.

1. Discipleship is the Clear and Central Command of Jesus

The first and most basic reason for giving ourselves to discipleship is that it was the final and central command Jesus gave us before returning to heaven to be with his Father. A more literal translation of that well-known command in the original Greek would read: “Therefore going, *make disciples* of all nations, baptising them ... teaching them ... ” (Matt 28:18-20). In other words, he saw ‘making disciples’ as the key issue; everything else hung on that.

Such a command from Jesus must be important; and the only right response from us is obedience. If there were no other reason for engaging in discipleship, this would be enough.

2. Discipleship is the Only Way to Prepare the Next Generation

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul gives us an interesting glimpse into his understanding of ‘generational transfer’, that is, passing things on faithfully from one generation to the next.

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Tim 2:1-2)

Note that Paul had in mind at least *four generations* here: *me* (Paul); *you* (Timothy); *reliable men*; *others*.

He was clearly thinking way beyond himself and his own generation. Faithfully training a son (Timothy) who could faithfully train others who in turn would train others, would ensure the message got passed on faithfully. Discipleship is the way that this can happen.

Right now, either you should be training ‘reliable men’ or should be being trained by one.

3. Discipleship is the Norm of Biblical Life

The more you dig into the Bible, the more clear it becomes that discipleship was a normal way of life. Not only did a father ‘disciple’ his son in the family business, but leaders of God’s people frequently disciplined others into their gifting and calling in God.

Consider the following examples in the Old Testament: Moses engaged in discipleship training with Joshua, Elijah with Elisha, Elisha with Gehazi, Isaiah with his disciples, Naomi with Ruth, Mordecai with Esther. In the New Testament we find this practice was continued: John the Baptist with his disciples, Jesus with the Twelve, Barnabas with Paul (yes, it was that way round to begin with!), Paul with Timothy and Titus, Peter and Barnabas with John Mark, older women with younger women (Titus 2:3-5).

It should be clear from all this that the importance of discipleship was thoroughly understood.

But they also saw what happened when one generation failed to disciple the next. The time of the Judges (between Joshua and Samuel) was a striking example of this.

“After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel ... Joshua son

of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance ... After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshipped various gods of the peoples around them.” (Judges 2:7-12)

Clearly the generational transfer had fallen down somewhere. Ongoing discipleship had been neglected, with disastrous consequences both for individuals and the nation. We can expect nothing better if we do not learn from that lesson!

4. Discipleship is the Only Way to bring about Multiplication

Imagine that an evangelist were to lead a thousand people to Christ every year. That would be good news indeed! At that rate, he would end up leading 20,000 people to Christ in 20 years. Looks good, doesn't it? But now let's look at it a different way.

If *one discipler* were to produce *one disciple* per year, after a year that disciple would be fully equipped to disciple someone else. So then, next year both would produce one disciple each, making four disciples altogether. In the third year these four would make four more disciples. It doesn't look much at first sight, does it? But if this carried on for twenty years, an amazing picture would unfold. So this is where you need to run and get your calculator to fill in the gaps. (Go on – get it – it will be worth it!)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Making converts</i>	<i>Making disciples</i>
1	1,000	1+1 = 2
2	2,000	2+2 = 4
3	3,000	4+4 = 8
4	4,000	8+8 = 16
5	5,000	16+16 = 32
6	6,000	32+32 = 64
<i>Year</i>	<i>Making converts</i>	<i>Making disciples</i>

7	7,000
8	8,000
9	9,000
10	10,000
11	11,000
12	12,000
13	13,000
14	14,000
15	15,000
16	16,000
17	17,000
18	18,000
19	19,000
20	20,000

The figure you will have come up with should absolutely astound you! Now, though the method above is based on some assumptions, it does show what can happen. And it does demonstrate that, to a great degree, ‘discipleship’ is our guarantee of reaching the world in a relatively short time, compared to merely making ‘converts’. By contrast, when ‘converts’ are followed up after a few months, we have noted that the percentage of backsliders is comparatively high. But with discipleship, a greater degree of quality control is maintained.

5. Discipleship Pushes us into Jesus

The purpose of discipleship is not to permanently fix someone in a relationship of subordination to the one discipling him, but to prepare him for true fellowship with, and usefulness to, the Master. Those of us who have walked in these things for years can testify to how very much discipleship has pushed us into Jesus and how we have seen it do the same with others that we have discipled too. Let us always remember that discipleship should push us into *him*, not into *us*. God does not want us to reproduce a carbon copy of ourselves, but wants us to help release the divine purpose hidden in

the heart of the learner. Therefore everything we do together should be to the end of pushing the disciple into Jesus. Only discipleship brings the necessary challenges for this to happen.

Let us never forget that, at the end of the day, we are *disciples of Jesus* and him alone. The goal of all of us is to become like him. “For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be *conformed to the likeness of his Son ...*” (Romans 8:29). To help fulfil this ultimate goal God has chosen other people to disciple us. When we get disciplined by others at an earthly level, we are at the same time being disciplined in character and values of the heavenly Christ. Paul’s heart desire for his disciples at Corinth was such that he could say, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ; so that I might present you as a pure virgin *to him.*” (2 Cor 11:2) Personal involvement and passion was clearly there (“I am jealous for you”); but it was all directed towards Christ.

The discipler brings the throne-room of God closer to us and presses the ‘Crown Rights’ of the Lord Jesus on the disciple and activates the growth process within him. At the same time the discipler must be careful not to have an ‘ownership’ mentality over the disciple, because they are owned by the Lord Jesus. The discipler is only a steward and a representative of the Lord. On the other hand the disciple should not despise or disregard his discipler because Jesus says, “He who listens to you, listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me.” (Luke 10:16)

Of course, there have always been those who want to be disciplined by ‘Jesus alone’ or who love to stress that “*The Lord is my shepherd.*” But only the super-spiritual refuse to acknowledge the human factor involved in the divine mission of discipleship. Actually God’s Word tells us that he has given to us gifts of anointed men to equip the church (e.g., Eph 4:11-13), as well as giving us many examples of the discipleship relationship and its fruitfulness. To ignore this, and to claim to be directly disciplined by God, is to open ourselves to pride, arrogance and rebellion.

Chapter 4

The Purpose of Discipleship

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) had a simple goal: to *make disciples* and to *teach them to obey* all that Jesus commanded. In other words, the discipleship had purpose to it. Paul too had purpose in his discipling. “We proclaim him (Jesus), admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present *everyone* perfect (*mature*) in Christ.” (Col 1:28) He was looking for both *quantity* (everyone) and *quality* (perfect/mature). Discipleship never existed as ‘an end in its own right’; it had purpose to it. And it is to this purpose that we now turn.

1. Maturity

“A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be *like his teacher*.” (Luke 6:40) Here is the first purpose of discipleship: to make us more like Jesus; more like him in behaviour, more like him in character and attitudes. This does not happen overnight – we need to grow into it.

Even Jesus grew into maturity! While we are told little in the gospels about his early life, Luke tells us that “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.” (Luke 2:52) There are four aspects of life mentioned here in which Jesus grew and matured:

a) *Intellectual maturity*

“Jesus grew in wisdom ...” Because he had truly become a man, he did not have a secret store of divine knowledge somewhere! (Though some of

the Early Church Fathers had Jesus running the universe while still a baby in the crib!) He had to grow and develop this aspect of his humanity. Some of this he did by asking questions of the religious leaders (Luke 2:46-47); no doubt he watched his father Joseph at work in the carpenter's shop; he certainly had to learn to be obedient to his parents (Luke 2:51). His wisdom grew, and with it his character, developing qualities of self-control, God-centredness, acceptance of his purpose in life, inner peace etc.

b) Physical maturity

“And Jesus grew ... in stature ...” He had to learn how to eat well, work hard, fast and pray, be self-disciplined, grow strong, and become a well-rounded person. All of this would stand him in good stead for when his ministry began.

c) Spiritual maturity

“And Jesus grew ... in favour with God ...” He had to learn how to pray and relate to his Father while he was here on earth, how to be sensitive to God, how to know his voice and have a passion for him, how to know his ways and prove them. He had to get the Word of God deep into him, for there would be times when he would have to call on it (e.g., Matt 4:4), and learn how to trust his Father in times of difficulty.

d) Social maturity

“And Jesus grew ... in favour with men.” The thing that stands out about Jesus in the gospels is that people *liked* him! But that didn't just *happen*! He had to learn how to relate to people, how to handle relationships, how to ‘give and take’ in the family setting with his brothers and sisters, how to accept others, and so on. All of this would again stand him in good stead for his ministry when God opened it up to him.

All of us are on such a journey of maturity, from spiritual infancy to spiritual adulthood, from being a spiritual babe to becoming spiritual fathers and mothers. This was the normal expectation of disciples in the New Testament church, and those who did not grow up were rebuked as still needing ‘milk’ instead of ‘solid food’ (Hebrews 5:13-14).

Maturity is basically to do with character. While justification is deliverance from the *penalty* of sin, sanctification is deliverance from the *pollution* and *power* of sin. And it is discipleship that provides the environment for this work of sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the operator in man's sanctification, but he works through the Word of truth, the prayer of faith, and the fellowship of disciples.

2. Ministry

Jesus called his disciples with a definite aim of ministry and function. This was made clear right at the beginning. “ ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you *fishers of men*.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.” (Mark 1:16-17) It would not be long before he was commissioning them quite specifically for ministry. “He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might *be with him* and that he might *send them out* to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” (Mark 3:14-15) Being with him, and being sent out are the two foundational aspects of discipleship. To use Paul's illustration of the body in 1 Corinthians 12, God does not just want us to *fit*, but also to *function*.

Finding your coach

Being discipled is rather like having your own personal trainer or ‘coach’. In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul tells us about a number of these specialist ‘coaches’ whose task is to train or equip people for ministry. We often call these the Five-fold Ministries:

Apostles, who build, challenge, equip, establish and pioneer.

Prophets who envision, challenge, provoke, direct and help bring God's Word into our lives.

Evangelists who provoke, enlarge, pioneer, reach out and push us out into God's world.

Pastors who care, disciple, nurture, encourage, and stick with problems until they are worked through.

Teachers who instruct, build, develop, strengthen, and root us in God's Word.

These five-fold ministries are there in order to “prepare God’s people for the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12) – built up in *unity*, in *intimacy* and in *maturity* (v13).

Of course, these are not the only ministries and gifts in the church. God has given many others too, such as administration, ‘helps’, government, generosity, miracle-working, healing, and so on. While anyone can *pastor* or care for anyone else, not everyone can *disciple* everyone else in particular gifting areas. If God is growing a particular gift or ministry in us, then we need to draw alongside someone else with that same gift or ministry and get all the input that we can from them so that our gifting can develop to its fullest potential.

A word of caution

While the Bible tells us that it is good to aspire to ministry and function (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Cor 14:1), it is important that we deal ruthlessly with selfish ambition and reaching out for position, status, and recognition. This was a lesson that Jesus’ disciples had to learn – often to their cost and embarrassment! (See, for example, Mark 9:33-37 and Matthew 20:20-28.) The focus in ministry should always be on *responsibility* and not on *rights*, on *privilege* not *power*. So be prepared for the one discipling you to address any such wrong attitudes in you during the discipling process.

3. Multiplication

Multiplication lies at the very heart of how the Kingdom operates. “I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a *single seed*. But if it dies, it produces *many seeds*.” (John 12:24) A little later Jesus would say this to his disciples: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you *bear much fruit*, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:8)

Jesus’ desire is that his disciples bear much fruit. We only have to look at the first days of the church to see this – growing from 12 disciples to 120, then 3000, and then even more. Within a couple of centuries, the church in Rome alone had over 35,000 disciples with 1673 of them financially supported, in spite of the persecution. Today in China, the church numbers well over 100

million amidst persecution. In the first century, one out of every 300 people was a Christian; today one out of every seven is a Christian.

Discipleship is what helps to bring about this multiplication of Kingdom life, in both quality and quantity. Two of the greatest hindrances to multiplication are *laziness* (when we just don't get round to things) and *busy-ness* (when we are so busy, but unproductive in that busy-ness). Discipleship can help us address both these issues and become more fruitful.

4. The Ultimate Intention

We often think of discipleship as a purely *personal matter*; but if we do so, we are wrong! Discipleship should be undertaken, not with a personal goal of maturity and ministry in mind, but with God's ultimate goal in mind. And God's ultimate intention is, quite simply, mind-blowing!

The prophet Habbakuk summed it up like this: "For *the earth will be filled* with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Habbakuk 2:14) Jesus put it like this: "... this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations ..." (Matt 24:14) And Paul wrote that "at the name of Jesus *every knee* should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and *every tongue* confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php 2:10-11) All of these had the ultimate intention in view.

Discipleship without an end-time perspective becomes little more than an individual journey to personal piety. Church history is full of such examples, whether it be in people hiding themselves away in monasteries or on the top of poles (honest!) to keep themselves from the big bad world out there, or in groups of holy huddles engaging in endless Bible study that made no impact on their society.

But discipleship with an end-time perspective results in a *corporate involvement in God's ultimate purpose* and the conclusion of all human history. It brings home to us that we are labouring, preparing and focusing beyond our own immediate existence towards God's ultimate intention, working towards the completion of the Big Picture. Such a view of discipleship is tremendously exciting!

Chapter 5

The Hallmarks of Discipleship

Jesus said that when a disciple was fully trained, he would become like his teacher (Luke 6:40). Anyone who is following the Lord Jesus, therefore, should expect to see the very nature of Jesus manifesting itself in greater and greater measure in him. Or, as Paul put it, “we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:18)

So, what are some of the hallmarks of the Lord Jesus that we should be expecting to see grow within the disciple?

1. Love

John, one of Jesus’ closest friends and disciples, wrote, “God is love ... ” (I John 4:8a). Little wonder, then, that a clear goal of Jesus for all of his disciples is to radiate this hallmark of love, just as he himself did. When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, because none of them would volunteer to do it, he said to them, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

In his later letter John would write: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” (1 John 3:16) Jesus loved us enough to die on the cross for us, and we are to learn to love others in the same way, to lay down our lives for them. This is at the heart of taking up ‘our cross’ daily. It is not locked into the vertical aspect of relationship with God alone but is also in the horizontal

dimension of loving others enough even to die for them. It is a crucifying of personal preference and self-interests every time. It is a love that ‘does’ good to people. It is discipleship.

A training to love

Christianity is about love; and so, whatever else discipleship does, it should train us to love. And yes, it really is possible to be trained to love! Paul referred to one very specific aspect of this in his letter to Titus when he wrote: “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live ... Then they can *train the younger women to love* their husbands and children ... ” (Titus 2:4). All of us can be *trained to love*.

Many of us have a limited understanding of what is really involved in loving the way that God himself does. Consider the qualities of love that Paul writes of in I Cor 13:4-8: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

A good exercise is to return to this passage occasionally and see how our love is growing in these very practical expressions of it.

Love is the best!

The Bible is clear that love supersedes all other qualities and functions. Paul begins 1 Corinthians 13 by saying that we can have all the qualities and spiritual gifts imaginable – beautiful tongues, powerful prophecy, amazing insights, staggering faith, limitless generosity – but if I “have not love, I gain nothing.” (v1-3) Being a disciple starts and ends with *love*. Why? because God himself starts and ends with love.

How am I doing?

So, here is a discipleship exercise for you to do now. Listed below are a number of areas where we have opportunity to show, and grow in, love. Why not pause and do an honest assessment of yourself in each of these areas.

Rate yourself on your 'Love factor' on a scale of '1 to 10', where '1' is 'low/not doing very well' and '10' is 'high/making excellent progress'.

Loving God	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Loving the Bible		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Loving a friend		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Loving relatives		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Loving enemies		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Loving the poor		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Fruitfulness

The second hallmark of a disciple is that he should be fruitful. This should not surprise us; for, as we have already seen, the Kingdom of God is all about multiplication. "This is to my Father's glory," said Jesus, "that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:8)

There are, it seems to me, two kinds of 'fruit' that Jesus is looking for. The first is to do with *character*; the second is to do with *ministry*.

Fruitfulness in character

Paul writes in Galatians 5:22-25: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." What he is saying here is that, just as a tree, if it is healthy, produces fruit quite naturally, so we disciples ought to bear this sort of fruit quite naturally too, through 'crucifying our sinful nature' and 'keeping in step with the Spirit'. Note too that Paul describes all these things as the *fruit* (singular!) of the Spirit. This is not a 'pick and mix' bar where we can choose which of them we fancy developing; it is a complete package – all are required!

Discipleship should include a regular check-up in all of these areas to see what progress we are making.

Fruitfulness in ministry

The other kind of fruit that we should be expecting to see grow in our lives is a more outward fruitfulness of ministry, or serving God and other people. This is referred to for the very first time in Scripture in Gen 1:28: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’” Part of fruitfulness meant that there was a job to be done!

Isaac was called to a life of fruitfulness – beginning to see more of what had been promised to his father Abraham. “That night the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will *increase the number of your descendants* for the sake of my servant Abraham.’” (Gen 26:24) As the years passed by, that fruitfulness would begin to unfold, as God prepared his even bigger plan.

With the arrival of Jesus on the scene, however, the growth of the Kingdom took an enormous leap forward. In fact, Jesus taught on many occasions that we should now begin to expect fruitfulness of a quite miraculous order. In the Parable of the Sower he said this: “But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, *yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*” (Matt 13:23) Fruitfulness in what we sow is meant to be the order of the day!

Any good discipleship will therefore look at this whole area of fruitfulness in ministry. Is it happening? If not, why not? How and where could it happen better? And so on.

A fruitfulness check-up

Have a go at rating your fruitfulness factor, where ‘1’ is ‘low/not doing very well’ and ‘10’ is ‘high/making excellent progress’.

Fruitfulness in character (the quality control)

Love factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Joy factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Peace factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Patience factor		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Discipleship

Kindness factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Goodness factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Faithfulness factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gentleness factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Self-control factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Fruitfulness in ministry (the quantity control)

How many people have I led to the Lord, or played a significant part in their being led to the Lord, in the last one month/one year/five years/ten years/my Christian lifetime?

How many people are looking to me to disciple them?

How much fruit is developing from my area of gifting or ministry?

How much serving have I done recently?

In the light of my answers to the above questions, is a change in my lifestyle or attitudes required? Is there a new commitment I need to make?

3. Obedience

On the basis that the disciple must be like his teacher, the third main hallmark of the Christian disciple must surely be *obedience*. Obedience characterised the life of Jesus, even to the point of paying the ultimate price – death (Php 2:8). And Jesus required obedience of those who would be his disciples. “If you continue to *obey* my teaching, you are truly my followers.” (John 8:31) “If you love me, you will *obey* what I command.” (John 14:15)

Obedience by definition is the ability to hear and act. The *promptness* with which we act is another indication of the quality of our obedience. And the *extent* to which we act is yet another indication, for whether we do it fully or partially reveals our heart. Obedience is something to be learned because it does not come naturally to us. Even Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered (Heb 5:7-8) and had choices to make. *Obedience is cultivated in the choices we make.*

All of us love obedience – especially when someone else needs to obey us! But the Kingdom is characterised by those who themselves know how to be obedient. Discipleship will therefore work on obedience – not for its own sake, or as an end in itself; but rather, as a Christ-like quality of prompt response to the Father’s heart for the sake of furthering his Kingdom.

This obedience will at times be worked out through obeying those ‘over us in the Lord’. The writer to the Hebrews had no hesitation in telling his readers, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17) This is not a call for ‘blind obedience’, come what may. God does not want us as unthinking robots! Rather, this is an appeal for an obedient heart towards those who are doing their very best to care for us and draw us on in the Lord. When there is this sort of attitude in the one discipling us, we need have no fear of obeying.

If discipleship is to do its work, obedience needs to be a key hallmark of the process. So, how are you yourself doing in this area?

4. Good works

In Ephesians 2:8-10 Paul writes, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In Titus 2:14-15 he writes of how Jesus gave himself, “to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, *eager to do what is good*. These then are the things you should teach.”

We are not saved *by* good works, but we are certainly saved *for* good works, and Paul was eager that Timothy should teach and disciple people in this.

(For more on this aspect of doing good works, see Vic Gledhill’s chapter in the Roots and Shoots booklet “*Getting the Good News Out!*”)

Chapter 6

The Cost of Discipleship

All advertising is aimed at getting across the unique ‘selling points’ or features of a particular product. The advertisers will try to hide any negative factors, or possibly even its cost. But Jesus did his ‘advertising’ very differently! He displayed his demands very clearly, and did not make it easy for anyone. If anything, he made it rather difficult, often laying down the most exacting demands to test where someone’s heart really was. Just consider some of the following statements taken from Matthew’s gospel (which is very much a ‘discipleship’ gospel):

“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’ ” (Matt 8:21-22)

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’ ” (Matt 16:24)

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ ” (Matt 19:21)

This is clearly not the sort of advertising designed to ‘win friends and influence people’! On the contrary, Jesus made it very plain that one had to count the cost before deciding to follow him.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the *cost* to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ”

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. *In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*” (Luke 14:28-33)

Clearly, Jesus intended there to be a cost to being a disciple of his. So let's take a look at some of those costs now.

1. No Guarantees of Security

Perhaps this seems a strange one to begin with. After all, don't we normally think in terms of Jesus providing the best security there is in the world? Well, of course, that's true. But the issue is: *what sort of security are we looking for?* If we are looking for the security of knowing that God is our Father, that he is for us, that – no matter what does happen or has happened in life – we cannot be separated from him, then Jesus will indeed provide all of this! But if we are looking for the security of a comfortable existence, the assurance of a good job and a peaceful life, and so on, then we may well find ourselves disappointed.

One would-be disciple who had not grasped this found himself being answered in an unexpected way. “As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ ” (Luke 9:57-58)

Even Jesus himself was buried in a borrowed tomb. His whole life was lived trusting in his heavenly Father for his provision and security. This does not mean that we should not work for our living! (In fact, see 2 Thess 3:10 for a startling comment of Paul's on that sort of attitude!) But it means that Jesus does not want any one of us to come with any expectation of benefit, or privilege or rights. He calls us to come to take on responsibility and to work, and to leave the rest to God.

2. The Priority of the Kingdom over Everything Else

Luke goes on in chapter 9 to tell us of another man who came with unclear expectations of the cost of discipleship. A seemingly hard challenge to him revealed that he had not yet got his priorities right.

“He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But the man replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ ” (Luke 9:59-60) At first sight, this looks so unreasonable! But the story does not require us to think that the young man’s father had, in fact, died and that there was a funeral to be arranged. What the would-be follower was saying was that he would follow Jesus *when he was free from all his family responsibilities*. But such conditions are not acceptable to the Lord. The Kingdom is what must always be sought first (Matt 6:33); when we do, everything else falls into place – even our family responsibilities.

3. The Importance of Single-mindedness

Luke’s third example of people unwilling to pay the cost goes like this: “Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’ ” (Luke 9:61-62)

When ploughing a field, the farmer focuses his eye at the far end of the field on a fixed object (maybe on the fence or the hedge) in order to plough in a straight line. If he allowed his mind to wander in all directions, or if he kept looking back over his shoulder, the ploughing would be in a real mess. *Distraction* and *double-mindedness* are hindrances that keep us from following Jesus and being a true disciple. Unless we settle this issue right at the beginning, it will constantly dog our footsteps.

4. The Priority of the Kingdom over Family Ties

“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my

disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’ ” (Luke 14: 25-27)

Once again, this seems a hard saying, and is certainly delivered to make us think. Clearly Jesus is not advocating hatred for our families here! (How could he when one of the Ten Commandments is to honour our father and mother?) What he is saying is this: our love for Jesus and his Kingdom should be so high that, *in comparison*, our love for all others (including our closest family members) should look like hatred. Jesus does not want any other tie to come between him and us.

The Christian disciple will often find challenges in this area, but it is so much easier if we count the cost right at the beginning.

5. Self-denial

“Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must *deny himself and take up his cross daily* and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.’ ” (Luke 9:23-24)

This sort of teaching deals with our ‘Adamic nature’ – that is, the sinful aspect of our nature that comes down the human family line from Adam to all of us. In the Garden of Eden God had told Adam not to eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But he did. He did what he pleased. And in doing so he lost everything – including his inheritance, his fellowship with his Creator, and his position as a Son. But in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus reversed all this. Rather than doing what he pleased, or what was convenient or comfortable, he demonstrated complete self-denial by saying to his Father, “Not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

Jesus wants disciples who will now allow *their* will be to be crossed, who are willing to follow the will of another – their heavenly Father – rather than their own. The discipleship process should therefore look to help us face up to this need for self-denial.

Perhaps this is a good point to stop and do a bit of self-assessment again. Look at the chart that follows and try to see to what extent you are motivated more by self or more by God in each of the areas given.

	Self				God		
Education	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Job	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Career	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Ambition	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Family	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Money	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Security	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Comfort	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
Leisure	3	2	1	0	1	2	3

6. Supremacy of Spiritual Ties over Natural Ties

“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’” (Matt 12:46-50)

In what is yet another hard and challenging saying, Jesus lays the axe at the root of the natural family; not because he is against it as such (indeed, how can it be when it was Father’s gift at creation?); but because he was *building a completely new family*, one based on obedience rather than blood relationships. This is radical thinking indeed!

This is the third time that he has challenged family ties, in order to emphasise the supremacy of the demands of the new community. If we do not have a revelation of this new community, we simply cannot digest this demand of Jesus.

The disciple of Jesus cannot avoid these sorts of challenges; and it is the discipleship process that helps us to face up to them.

7. Taking up the Cross

In Matthew 16:24 we read these words: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’ ” In the time of Jesus, the cross meant only one thing: it was an instrument of torture and death. If one was seen on the street carrying a cross, it meant he was being taken by the authorities for execution. It meant death.

So being asked to “take up your cross” was rather like saying, “Order your coffin!”, as if to indicate that you would need it at any time and that you were willing to die at a moment’s notice. If one was willing to pay the price of death, then any other cost would seem trivial in comparison. It was indicative of death-to-self. As a result, the desire for self-preservation and personal rights were totally dealt with.

Conclusion

The cost of becoming a disciple was kept high. Jesus did not offer any concessions or discounts or special promotions. He appeased no one. At one point when a large number of disciples found his sayings too hard, they simply left him – and he let them go. He even offered his own disciples the choice of leaving if they wanted to. They, however, chose to stay because they had had a revelation which led Peter to answer, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Discipleship is a quality control process. If one is willing to pay the cost from the outset, then all the hindrances are removed and the disciple is so much more certain to reach his or her potential.

Chapter 7

The Benefits of Discipleship

Having just had a chapter on the cost of discipleship, we clearly need to move on and look at the other side of the coin. For, while the cost is real enough, the benefits are too. And it is as we resolve to pay the cost that the benefits begin to come flooding our way.

1. Freedom

Religion binds people up; but Jesus brings us freedom. Jesus once said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32) Discipleship here is characterised by ‘holding to the teachings of Jesus’, and its end result is that, as we do so, we come into greater freedom.

But what is this freedom ‘from’? If we read on in John 8, we see that it is about being set free from *slavery to sin*. “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (v34-36)

Discipleship, then, is designed to deal with our *character bondages*; those things that we are still slaves to, even though we may have given our life to Jesus and are truly saved. Jesus lists the sort of things he means in Mark 7:20-22: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean’. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander,

arrogance and folly.” (Of course, this list is not exhaustive – and we cannot ‘let ourselves off’ if our particular sin is not included!)

Many of us can testify to seeing real character bondages broken as we have shared things with the one discipling us, receiving prayer, setting goals and targets, keeping accountable on how things are going, and so on. Of course, a resolve to be absolutely honest is a real key here. If we are not honest and vulnerable, but cover things up, the issues cannot get dealt with. But as we are honest, discipleship helps bring us into the truth and the truth will set us free.

2. Friendship and Family

Discipleship is not meant to be a ‘clinical’ thing. At the very heart of it lies friendship and family. If it does not, it is not discipleship! Jesus said, “You are my *friends* if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends ... ” (John 15:14-15). For Jesus, discipleship was first and foremost about *building friendship* and sharing in Father’s heart together. When you look at the relationship between Paul and Timothy, or Paul and Titus, you see the same sense of a deep bond of *friendship* and *concern for one another*.

Likewise, the person who disciples you will be concerned for you as a friend; they will rejoice with you in your success, and at the same time share your heartaches when things go wrong; they will want to hear about what is going on in your life; they will want to have fun and ‘share life’ with you, not just meet up for ‘counselling sessions’. But all of this can happen only if we grow in opening up our hearts and letting one another in.

Over the years, Vic Gledhill has mentored me and cared for me. I know that my own ministry and the ministry of Bombay Baptist Church would not be what it is if it were not for Vic and the way that God has used him. But I also know that it has all come through *friendship*. We have walked together and talked together, laughed together and cried together, ministered together and relaxed together. *Friendship* has lain at the very heart of our relationship, and continues to do so, even though the discipling period has changed into

something else. Today I feel like I am a member of Vic's family and he too includes me into his own life as a friend would do.

Ask God to grow a real friendship between you and the one who is discipling you. It is a tremendous blessing!

3. Fulfilment in Function

Discipleship helps us to *discover* our gifts and talents and to *develop* them. The one who disciples us will be looking for the 'fingerprints of God' in what we do, will be able to help focus us on the gifting that is growing and developing (but without our neglecting a well-rounded development in other areas too), and will be able to help train us in that gifting. He will try to open up opportunities, nudge us into action, bring reflection back to us 'after the event' and help us to develop the growing gift. With this training, we will grow and develop in the area of our gifting, with the inevitable increasing fulfilment that this brings.

For those of us involved in doing the discipling, there is no greater joy than seeing people grow in what God has put into them. You may need to be 'pruned' at times (and sometimes that pruning may seem painful!); but in such times, keep your eyes fixed on the end goal and the fulfilment that God is leading you into. As the writer of Proverbs puts it, "A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul ... " (Proverbs 13:19).

Even when the initial phase of discipleship is over, we may need the occasional nudge of encouragement from our pastor to keep us moving and not to settle for less than God has put within us. Paul had to do this with young Pastor Timothy on one occasion, when it seemed like he was becoming overwhelmed by the responsibilities before him. In one of his letters to him he wrote: "*Do not neglect your gift*, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you." (1 Tim 4:14) In his second letter he had to write: "For this reason I remind you to *fan into flame the gift of God*, which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2 Tim 1:6) Paul knew there was great fulfilment in functioning in what God has given to us; but he also knew that this at times needed encouragement from others for it to happen. Discipleship is one of God's best tools to this end.

In my initial years Vic must have noticed my own hesitation in giving a clear lead. I was willing to push others and sit at the back. He warned me by saying that if I failed to take up my role, someone else would do it. And if this person damaged the church, then I would be responsible because I was abdicating my role. Oh Boy! This did it! I had no choice but to stand up. As a result it has put some steel in my backbone.

4. Fruitfulness in Ministry

We have already touched on the issue of fruitfulness in this booklet. But fruitfulness is not only a *mark* of discipleship, it is also a *benefit* of it. How exciting it is to know that our lives are not wasted! That they can ‘count’ for God and his Kingdom, that they can be fruitful in things that will last for eternity! Just as deeds of darkness are fruit-less (Eph 5:11), so the opposite is true about the deeds of light. Paul speaks of us “bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10). The writer of Hebrews says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, *it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*” (Hebrews 12:11)

Jesus clearly taught his disciples to *expect fruitfulness*. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be *even more fruitful* ... I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will *bear much fruit* ... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you *bear much fruit*, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:1-8)

Discipleship will inevitably involve ‘pruning the vine’ at times. But the promise of Jesus is that it will always bring forth increasing fruitfulness.

5. Focus

The Bible tells us that all of us have been predestined before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:5,11). Discipleship helps us to discover just what it is we have been predestined for and then to focus on this purpose of our living.

Paul had given key years of his life to persecuting the church; but when he had his dramatic encounter with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22), his life was radically changed. He at last discovered what he had been truly born for, what he had been predestined for; that he was called by God to work among Gentiles (Acts 26:15-20). And it was a man coming alongside him – Barnabas – who made room for that to happen (Acts 9:26-27; 11:25-26). In Acts 13 we read of how Barnabas and Paul, in response to a clear word from the Lord, went out on an apostolic outreach journey, making an impact mainly among the Gentile nations. After that first experience, Paul never stopped! He discovered what he had been born for! (And the discipleship brought to him by Barnabas was a real key in that.) Ever thereafter he kept his focus, to such an extent that he could write: “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But *one thing I do*: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) From those early days, he had been disciplined into how to keep his focus; and now he was living in the enjoyment of it.

6. Furtherance of the Anointing

In 2 Kings 2 we read the story of the final days of Elijah’s life. Elijah was a man who had invested heavily in training up a successor and who understood the principles of discipleship. And Elisha, his disciple, had understood them too. Shortly before Elijah was about to be miraculously taken up into heaven, he asked Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “*Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,*” Elisha replied (v9).

While in the language of the time this did not mean, ‘Let me be twice as successful as you’, but rather ‘Let be your true inheritor’, it shows that Elisha understood the need for the anointing to be carried on and extended. And in fact, a glance at the following chapters shows us that, actually, Elisha ended up doing more miracles than Elijah ever had.

But it was not just Elijah and Elisha who understood this. Jesus clearly modelled it too. In John 14:12 Jesus told his disciples, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do *even*

greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” While this may strike us as amazing, it is a clear indication of the desire of Jesus to see the anointing *not merely reproduced* in his disciples, but *extended*.

The heart of all involved in discipleship in these days should be to see the anointing go further in the next generation, for this is the only way we will see significant growth. We should be looking to encourage our disciples to go further, pray better, see more, experience more of God’s power, than we have ever seen in our lifetime. This is certainly the heart, and expectation, of all of us at a senior leadership level.

And to those of you being discipled, my encouragement is this: so press in to the man or woman discipling you that it will be their joy and delight to pray, and expect, such a release of God’s furthered anointing over you!

Chapter 8

Discipleship in the Life of Joshua

In this final chapter we want to look at a specific discipleship situation to see what we can learn from it. The one I have chosen is Joshua, who was disciplined by Moses. As we look at his life, let's note a number of areas in which he was disciplined.

1. Training in War and Spiritual Warfare

In Exodus 17:9 Moses sends Joshua to fight the Amalekites. This skill in warfare would be something that Joshua would need to develop for what lay ahead.

But the battle did not just depend on what *Joshua* did; it mattered far more on what *God* did. Behind the warfare lay a need for spiritual warfare. And so Moses, Aaron and Hur went up the hill to engage in prayer before the Lord. The spiritual warfare they waged there affected the outcome of the war down on the plains. The interesting thing is that God told Moses to make sure that a record was kept of this event so that Joshua would hear the whole story. "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and *make sure that Joshua hears it*, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.' Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. He said, 'For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.' " (Exodus 17:14-16)

What stands out here is that Moses did not want Joshua to think that victory had come from his own efforts. As part of his discipleship, he wanted him never to forget the importance of spiritual warfare.

For further thought:

Is training in seeing things from God's perspective and in spiritual warfare a part of your own discipleship programme?

2. Training in Practising the Presence of God

Important as being active for God was, Moses also trained Joshua in how to spend time in God's presence. Having been called by God to come up the mountain to meet with him, Moses chose Joshua as his sole companion, while the other elders were left behind.

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.’ Then Moses set out with Joshua his assistant, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, ‘Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.’ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.” (Exodus 24:12-16)

Even then the waiting was not over, for Moses entered the cloud and they stayed up on the mountain for “forty days and forty nights”. Joshua was indeed learning how to wait! But the lesson stuck. Later in Exodus (33:7-11) we learn of how Moses would go to the ‘Tent of Meeting’ where God spoke to him face to face. And then we read these words: “Then Moses would return to the camp, *but his young assistant Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.*” (v17) He had been trained how to wait, how to practise the presence of God.

For further thought:

Is training on how to wait and hear God's voice a part of your own discipleship programme?

What about spending a day (or at least an evening) of ‘waiting on God’ with the person discipling you? You could use the time to worship, pray, listen to God, operate spiritual gifts, and so on, writing down what you felt God said to you.

3. Training in How to Serve

Servanthood, as we have seen earlier in this booklet, lies at the heart of the Kingdom. It is one of the most fundamental attributes of a disciple and a pre-requisite for all future leadership. Joshua too was trained in how to be a servant. In fact he is often called the *servant* (KJV) or *assistant* (NIV) of Moses, as the following verses show:

“Then Moses set out with Joshua his *assistant*, and Moses went up on the mountain of God.” (Ex 24:13)

“The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young *assistant* Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.” (Ex 33:11)

“Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses’ *assistant* since youth ... ” (Numbers 11:28)

“But your *assistant*, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.” (Deut 1:38)

Moses was not embarrassed to let Joshua be his servant, nor did Joshua feel belittled by so being. Both saw in this the training of God for what lay ahead for Joshua.

For further thought:

Is servanthood a key aspect of my discipleship programme? If not, how could I begin to build this into it? (N.B. Try to serve without making it obvious!)

4. Training in Faith and Mission

In Numbers 13 Joshua is included among those who were sent to spy out the Promised Land. While many of those who returned came back with

fearful reports that spread discouragement among the people, Joshua spoke up with the eye of faith.

“Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, ‘The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.’ ” (Numbers 14:6-9)

Joshua had been given opportunities by Moses to see with the eye of faith, as Moses himself had had to do. This would be such an important factor for his leadership of the people into the Promised Land one day.

For further thought:

Is there opportunity in my discipleship programme for the development of faith and mission, or am I locked in at a low level of expectation?

When I am given opportunity to be trained in these areas, do I respond with faith or fear? Do I have any hidden agendas in what I do? (For an example of someone who did, read about Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, in 2 Kings 5.)

5. Training in Discernment

Discernment is one of the most needy gifts in leadership. Without it we can quickly jump to the wrong conclusions or can even be tricked by others. We have the record of at least one incident when Moses had to train Joshua in discernment.

When Moses and Joshua were up the mountain for such a long period with God, the people assumed that something must have happened to them and that they weren’t coming back. Amazingly, they promptly began to make an idol of a calf (a current pagan symbol) for themselves and to have a great feast around it (Exodus 32:1-6). But God revealed this to Moses, and he promptly set off down the mountain again. As they approached the camp, Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting. He wrongly assumed that the noise was “the sound of war in the camp” (v17). But Moses corrected him,

in the light of what God had revealed to him, discerning that, “It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat, but it is the sound of singing that I hear.”

Things are not always what they seem! And any good discipleship programme should seek to train its disciples in how, not to look and see the obvious, but to discern what is really going on.

For further thought:

Am I looking to include an element of training in discernment in my discipleship programme?

6. Training in Understanding God’s Purpose

One of the most valuable areas that we can look to train people in is in the area of how to understand God’s purpose and to see what God is doing in any situation.

In Numbers 11:16-30 we read the story of how Moses called for the seventy elders of Israel and how only sixty-eight of them turned up. God then “took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again.” (11:25) The strange thing was, the Spirit also fell on the two who had not bothered to turn up! – which seemed to irritate Joshua no end. But Moses’ reply was very simple: “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them.” (11:29)

Joshua’s thinking at this point was small-minded and his heart defensive. But Moses used the occasion to train Joshua to always look for God’s bigger purpose. Sure, they should have come to the meeting! But God is bigger than the meeting! Sure, they didn’t deserve it! But none of us ever deserves it! Moses wanted Joshua to understand something of the heart of God – at this moment concerning his generous giving of the gift of prophecy. He exposed Joshua’s jealousy and overprotection of his master, and himself.

It is always easy to see the negative. But those who want to be discipled into what God has for them must learn how to have their negative attitudes exposed and how to always look for the bigger purpose of God.

For further thought:

Does my discipleship make space for being trained in how to see the bigger purposes of God? Do I seek to learn from those who understand this important principle?

7. Joshua – a Man of Success and Failure

After the death of Moses, Joshua moved into the position of leadership for which Moses had been discipling him. “After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, *you ...*’ ” (Joshua 1:1) It must have seemed like a daunting task! For the past forty years and more, he had worked alongside Moses, always being able to look to him or to ‘pass the buck’ if things got too difficult. But now, everything lay on his shoulders. Now it was time for him to prove God for himself, just as he had proved him when Moses was around. And God did not disappoint him.

The book of Joshua records many of Joshua’s successes over the following years. He led the people into the Promised Land, secured some amazing victories in battle, defeated thirty-one kings and occupied much of the land. He divided up the land and allotted it to the different tribes according to God’s instructions. He experienced the supernatural, just as Moses had done in Egypt and the wilderness: he crossed the River Jordan in flood as if on dry ground; he saw the walls of Jericho collapse with a mere shout; he had a vision of the Commander of the Lord’s Army (quite possibly the Lord himself); he even saw the sun stand still! And he ended his years by leading the people to renew their covenant-commitment to the Lord.

What a list! And all because he gave himself to the discipleship process.

But discipleship does not make us faultless! And Joshua experienced failures too. In Joshua 7 he failed to inquire of the Lord about a group of people who turned up with a story of woe, and found he ended up making an alliance with the Gibeonites, when God had clearly declared that all the inhabitants of Canaan had to be driven out. And perhaps his greatest mistake was his failure to disciple another to take over from himself. While the people and the elders were faithful to God in his own generation, there was no-one else who could take charge and be faithful for the next generation.

(See Judges 2:6-10) The one who had been so well disciplined made the basic mistake of not disciplining others too!

But this is why I love the Bible. It is so utterly real and honest. It tells the good, the bad, and the ugly. And when it records failures as well as successes, it gives me hope that God may yet use me!

For further thought:

Are you praying that God will give you people to disciple one day, even if you are not disciplining anyone yet? Are you thinking about preparing others to take over after you? And are you learning to ‘outlive your failures’?

Not the First – Not the Last

This was just the life of one man being disciplined by another. But we could, of course, have chosen many more – Elijah and Elisha, Naomi and Ruth, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy, Jesus and The Twelve. (In fact, a good next step would be to do your own ‘Discipleship’ Bible study on some of these and see what you can draw out.)

But the story does not stop with the final pages of the Bible. Throughout church history, the most dynamic groups have been those that practised discipleship – such as John Wesley and his ‘Class System’. Discipleship still brings the same blessing, and hope, to the church today. Will *you* stand in that line of hope and blessing – both by being disciplined and committing yourself to disciple others?