



The Disciple

The chosen one is the disciple. Not everyone can be a disciple of Jesus. The reason for this is, many who purport to be the disciples of Christ are not ready for the suffering of the call or the rigours of the faith (discipline of faith) to stay in the call. Along with this, many fall away into worldly temptations brought about by the flesh and the devil. Others become deceived by themselves to think that **they do not need** God or fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord to guide them. Every single decision in life must be made with the influence of God for safety reasons. This deception of pride happens once people come to the knowledge of certain spiritual truths or when they have been gifted to see results from God's power through their gifts. The foolish Galatians moved away from the Spirit of God to the Law of God by self determination and witchcraft even though they started at a higher plain in the Spirit. Now, it seems the flesh was deceived into believing a lie of the devil.

Jesus Himself experienced this falling away of disciples when He asked them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is estimated that about five hundred of them left Him. They said; "it is a hard saying". These disciples had seen and experienced the ministry of power through Jesus but moved away because they found it difficult to accept a higher plain of truth. Apostle John also wrote about certain men who had left their company having started with them and said, 'they were with us and went out from us and so we know they were not of us'. Finally, the Sower's parable clearly explains the condition of the hearts (soil) of the people to whom the gospel is preached. Three out of four hearts (soils) do not accept the word of God (the seed) and at varying stages of their walk with the Lord, they walk away from Him.

Why start with the negative when trying to explain who a disciple is? The reason for this is to explain the cost associated with discipleship. Even when a genuine disciple is walking with God, he or she finds it extremely difficult to stay on the journey because of the cost of discipleship. The personal cost to the soul is extreme at times and can even end in loss of life like most of the disciples of Jesus found out. Hence, martyrdom is a cost of discipleship at times though not for everyone. Apostle Paul spoke of loneliness, untold suffering, shipwrecks, being flayed, no family or money at times, often hungered for food and even lost in sea all in the service of God's purposes and as instructed by Jesus. This and other types of suffering can happen to us who want to be disciplined by Jesus as well. Irrespective of that, one must decide that when they put their hands to the plough that they must submit to the will of God.

To give a definition to the meaning of a disciple we must start at the word itself and break it down. The word uses discipline as a root word. If that is the case, a disciple is a disciplined follower of Christ and an ardent believer of Christ who disciplines him. When one is subject to discipleship, one must accept all that the Teacher (in this case Jesus) of the disciple states and teaches. One may not understand everything that is said or required of him to do but one must learn and understand through a process of discipleship. This process is never-ending as Christ is never-ending. The disciple is not greater than the Teacher and never will be.

In the context of discipleship training, God appoints many instructors to disciple His student. These aren't necessarily pleasant people and often come into our lives sometimes are very difficult to be with. So, in order to learn, one's character must be of great humility and submission without accepting abuse. A teacher is not allowed to abuse his student but can place the student in arduous conditions of learning. This too will shape character.

The character of a disciple is important and so as he must emulate Christ in every way in body, soul and spirit. By this I mean, all triune characteristics of the individual must pursue Christ through the Holy Spirit to be Christlike. There are many who emulate Christ in one or two of these characteristics, but few do so in all three areas. This is a sad indictment on the disciple because he or she will display their weaknesses through this failure to emulate Christ in all areas. However, the work of the Holy Spirit is to perfect us and so He endeavours to do so, yet, it will be very costly and difficult for the disciple. The disciple may not always understand the workings of the Master and how He treats His disciple but when the disciple trusts the Master, he is sure to find that His Master knows what He is doing. This relationship of trust is what the whole journey of discipleship is about. Faith can get you some of the way, but trust covers the arena of the unknown and the often silences of God.

The disciple has the great privilege of emulating what the Master says and does. This takes the disciple into the area of the supernatural because he is employing all that the Master gives him which comes from God. Since the disciple is ministering spiritual things, he also reaps spiritual rewards. This far outweighs anything he may gain in the natural. It is this area of the supernatural that is so life-changing and endearing (loveable) that it changes the disciple forever as He watches the Master working through him. It also helps him forget the natural hardships he goes through in order to achieve the supernatural on earth. This is the disciples reward.

As time goes by in servitude, the disciple begins to change into the image of his Master more and more. This part of the journey of discipleship is ever-challenging as there always seems to be discipline applied even after many achievements are in place. This is so because the enemies of pride and boasting must be placed under the feet of the disciple or else, the disciple will get carried away with his own achievements. Imagine a student who raises the dead and heals the blind, deaf and mute. When that happens at will, it can easily go the head of the disciple and even make him think he is the one with the power. The servant is never above the Master and one must always remember that it is the Christ in the disciple that does the work anyway.

Discipleship cannot be taken for granted at any stage because the disciple who becomes the Teacher must also be submitted to others below him in status and cadre because he too is a member in the body of Christ. So, it is essential that the disciple understands that he is a functionary in the body of Christ even though he may be given an elevated position or mantle. The truth is, every one of us are called and chosen by God and placed in the body according to God's wisdom and will. So, no one can boast that they made it there on their own.

The disciple is ever learning about what it takes to fulfil the tasks the Master has for him. With each growing moment, the responsibilities increase but they are never overbearing to the point of becoming unachievable. One common statement of Christ may be, 'My grace is sufficient for you'. The idea of making something difficult is so that the disciple always depends on the Master. The disciple must always understand at any given moment that he cannot do anything without Jesus. If this is not understood the disciple will lose his

way and end up in pride. He must also understand that the Master can choose a donkey to correct the disciple or choose a babe in Christ to achieve even greater things than the disciple. The sovereignty of God allows for this to take place despite our maturity in Christ. Power is not exclusive to the disciple only.

What the disciple achieves is merely what the Master wants him to achieve. To do this, he is trained, equipped and sent out. Yet, the training can be on the job and so one must be prepared for that too and the suddenness of things that need to be done.

There are many examples of discipleship that are noteworthy

1. Elijah asked to do a task beyond his capacity, does it and then runs for his life because he is afraid for his life. Yet, God teaches him to depend on God and then raises him up to go to the next level of his discipleship. Yet Elijah was a Master of Israel. This is the critical issue that a disciple must understand. Though he is a Master to men, he is a disciple to Christ.
2. Submission is a key aspect of discipleship. Elisha was totally submitted to Elijah till the time of his promotion. If he had deviated in any way, he would have lost his mantle. This is important to note in discipleship. It is not about what one observes and knows even as much as the Teacher but is never to usurp the Teacher.
3. Listening and obeying the commands of the Teacher is as important to the disciple as anything else in discipleship. If the disciple does not listen and does not do what the Teacher says, he can lose his position and cause problems for others. Gehazi did not listen to Elisha and ended up getting the disease of leprosy that was healed in another. This affected his relationships and he was cursed for life.

Disciples are called and chosen. Some are called and others are chosen. Either way, they must follow. Disciples follow like none other. They are not like other believers. Their function and lifestyles are very different to normal believers. That is why disciples must understand their calling and choosing and above all the responsibilities of the mantle they carry.

If you are keen to become a disciple of Christ and not just a mere believer, then you must be prepared to follow the Lord wherever He tells you to go and do whatever He tells you to do.

Blessings

Noble

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