

CONSIDERING DISCIPLESHIP



Discipleship is an intentional, life-on-life relationship in which one person helps another grow into Christian maturity through regular meetings to focus on studying the Bible, ministry coaching, personal counseling, and prayer, in the context of a close personal friendship.

The goal of discipleship is to mature a Christian to the point at which s/he will be competent to disciple and lead other people. This was the method Jesus used to raise up every leader in the early church. The success of Christianity depended on successful discipleship, and in the same way, the success of the church today is also dependent on successful discipleship.

Discipleship is a serious commitment to grow with God and to be used by him in ministry and should not be something entered into lightly. Each party needs to make certain commitments before this relationship will be effective to achieve its goals.

The **discipler** needs to be able to lead by example. S/he must be willing to commit to praying for the disciple regularly, coaching him/her in various moral decisions and ministry decisions, counseling the disciple through life choices and changes, and studying and teaching the Word to the disciple. This is a significant investment of time and emotional energy. A discipler should have reached a level of Christian maturity beyond that of the disciple, exhibit good Christian character, have a working knowledge of the Bible, and have no major disqualifying sins.

The **disciple** needn't have attained any particular level of Christian character or maturity, but rather, ought to exhibit a certain willingness to grow with and be used by God. The disciple ought to have a genuine, deep desire to be involved in Christian ministry. Vulnerability with others, self-sacrifice (putting the needs of others above one's own), and willingness to act on steps suggested by the discipler (in accordance with the Bible, of course!) are key elements of a successful discipleship relationship.

Areas which should be addressed in discipleship include:

- Grace- what it is in relation to the law, and how it changes us,
- Sanctification- allowing Grace to change our character and actions
- Identity- who we are in Christ
- Bible Study- deep study of the Bible
- Prayer- how to pray effectively and what to pray for
- Theology- a deep understanding of who God is, who Satan is, and who we are
- Evangelism- sharing this good news with others, including apologetics
- Relationships- Married or single in romantic relationships, friendships, and family, and the body of Christ
- Service- following the example of Christ to give of our ourselves for the benefit of others
- Money- giving to the church/ other charities, work-life balance, etc.

If you aren't sure if you are ready to be discipled, here are some things to think through:

- Am I interested in being used by God to build and expand his kingdom even if no one notices, or do I just want to "perform" spiritually so others will think highly of me?
- Do I want to learn more about God and the Bible and grow with him, or am I happy with the level of spiritual maturity I have already attained?
- Am I willing to sacrifice things I might want- material possessions, popularity, worldly opportunities- in order to follow God's will for my life?
- Am I willing to be honest about the struggles in my life- hard situations, sin issues, and desires- and address them under grace?

'Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me."' -Matthew 16:24, NLT