



Elements *of Discipleship*

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Discipleship Elements

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Chapter 1 Encounter

Before we can do anything in the way of discipling others, we need to find people to disciple. There are two possibilities for doing this. The most common is to find those who are already followers of Christ and help them grow. This is a valid approach but fails to take into account a larger group of people who need to be sought out to disciple. Actually, the most common pattern is neither of these. All too often leaders wait for someone to ask to be discipled. This is incredibly sad and wrong on so many levels.

Truthfully, the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 was to go and announce the gospel and make disciples. This would strongly suggest that we change our approach to discipling in a significant way. We need to begin to see everyone we meet as a potential disciple and make every effort to meet them and begin the process of discipling.

This may seem strange, but it was a key element in how Jesus carried out this work when he was here on this earth. He went where people were and called them to follow him. I say called because it was more than simply inviting them to do so. The key is that they were not already his followers. While there were a few who were following John the Baptist, or at least were spending time with John, they were not looking to become a follower of Jesus. Also even when they were told to go and meet Jesus, like Andrew, they didn't necessarily plan on becoming followers of Jesus, much less his disciples.

Consider the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. If we study a bit more closely the history of Jesus and these four men, it did not begin on the day that Jesus asked Peter to let him use his boat to sit in and speak to the people. It began before this. Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist. One day John the Baptist saw Jesus passing by and told Andrew and another person to follow Jesus (Jn 1:35-39). They did so and spent a day with Jesus.

As a result of this encounter, Andrew went and found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus, telling him he had found the

Messiah. Simon came and Jesus looked at him and renamed him Cephas (or Peter) (Jn 1:40-43). At some point after this, Jesus meets Peter fishing. Jesus is focused on teaching, but he knows Peter and so asks to use his boat. Peter agrees and then follows the story of the incredible catch of fish and Jesus calling Peter to follow him. It happens that Andrew, James, and John are there as well and included in the invitation.

We are told that Jesus went to find Philip (Jn 1:43). This is interesting in that it suggests that Jesus has had prior contact with Philip and decided to search for him. He finds him and invites him to follow him. Philip does not do so immediately. Instead, he goes in search of Nathanael to tell him about Jesus. He then brings Nathanael to Jesus. Nathanael is skeptical about the possibility of Jesus being the Messiah because he is from Nazareth. When he finally meets Jesus, Jesus comments that he is a true Israelite. Nathanael rightly questions how Jesus could know this. Jesus states he saw Nathanael sitting under a tree before Philip found him (Jn 1:44-48). Jesus had seen these people and been around them. Such comments suggest that this was not a blind selection. Jesus has met these people, learned about them and their lives.

We know that Jesus encountered Matthew in the city collecting taxes. Jesus approaches him and calls him to follow him (Mt 9:9). We don't know if he has had any prior contact with Matthew, but Jesus clearly knows who he is and has come to him to call him. It is hard to imagine entering the town and not taking notice of the tax collector and people lined up to pay their taxes. Also, the very real likelihood that there were Roman soldiers nearby to protect this person who was important to them. Those taxes were a critical part of life and they had to be paid. This all suggests that Jesus had seen Matthew and maybe had greeted him and learned something about him.

Did they become the disciples of Jesus in that moment? I don't think so. Did they decide to follow Jesus? Clearly, they did. What is even more clear is that Jesus went to where the people were and called them to follow him. It is also clear that, in the eyes of others, they

become his disciples. We see this in the reaction of the Pharisees to Jesus spending time in the house of Matthew along with other tax collectors and “sinners”. They considered those who followed Jesus to this house his disciples (Mt 9:11). This was normal in their world. They considered anyone who followed a teacher to be the disciples of that teacher.

I have dealt with the few that we have some information about. But we can easily believe that Jesus met each of the others in some place or at some time. This was the pattern of his life, to go where the people were, learn about them, and then invite them to join him. As a result, at times there was a significant group of people following Jesus. This included at least 72 men who were selected to carry out a specific task (Lk 10:1). There was also a group of women who became part of the group (Lk 8:1-3).

We see this pattern over and over. Jesus is always looking for people. He is always available to meet them and interact with them in their world. He is always ready to invite people, whether he has known them for a short time or a longer time. He invites them. Some of them join the group and some stay where they are. Key examples of people that Jesus met but didn't join the group would be:

Zaccheus – Jesus went to his house and as a result the world and direction of Zaccheus is changed. Jesus does not invite him to leave his work or to join the group. He does declare that he is now a true son of Israel. (Lk 19:1-10)

Nicodemus – Jesus goes to his house and has a discussion with this leader. Nicodemus does not join the group, but he will declare himself as a follower at a later time. He questions the actions of the Sanhedrin at a later time and aids in Jesus' burial. (Jn 3; 7:50-51; 19:39)

Lazarus, Martha, and Mary – They provide a context for meeting others and are clearly followers of Jesus. How they meet is not made clear but clearly Jesus knows them. They are not part of the group that travels with Jesus. I say this because each time they appear in the story he is visiting them. (Lk 10:38; Jn 11, 12)

Gadarene – Jesus encounters him in a cemetery. He is wild and possessed by demons. Jesus drives them out and talks with him. When Jesus is ready to leave, he wants to go with Jesus. Instead, Jesus sends him to his family with the direction to tell them what has happened. (Mk 5:19; Lk 8:38-39)

Jesus declared that his purpose was to seek out the lost so that they could be saved (Lk 19:10). What is interesting is that as part of this plan he did not go in search of those who were considered righteous, those who already knew the truth and followed it in some form. He came searching for those who were sinners and needed healing and forgiveness (Mt 9:13; Lk 5:31).

Later, once the church was established, we see God teaching this principle. Peter is sent to meet Cornelius, which opens the way for the mission to the Gentiles and later to the world (Ac 10). Philip is sent to meet a man traveling home to Ethiopia, which opens the door for establishing a church in that region.

This is the heart of the mission of God: to go where there are people in need and invite them to hear the gospel. This is what drove Paul in his mission. He was always searching for places to meet people. He went to:

- Synagogues – Ac 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; 18:4; 19:8; Ac 22:19; 26:11
- Markets – Ac 17:17;
- Riverside – Ac 16:13
- Areopagus – Ac 18:19
- Jail – Ac 24:24-26; 26:1; 28:30-31

As we read through his letters, we learn about people that he has met at various times and places who have been invited to be part of the work of sharing the gospel. He meets Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Most likely in the market. He meets Timothy and his parents in Lystra. We really do not know where he meets Silas and Luke, but they become part of the work. From there the list goes on to include, Titus, Philemon, Epaphras, and so many others.

Clearly the first step in discipleship is to seek out people and invite them to hear the gospel. From there we move on to the next step, Calling.

Chapter 2 Calling or Selecting

From all those who chose to follow Jesus, some are selected for another level of training and discipleship. The question in this is why didn't he select all of those who followed him to be trained at this level? My answer is that he indeed did train everyone. Each person he met was given something to think about and reflect on. They received some piece of teaching that would change their lives from simply hearing the invitation to becoming someone who would tell others.

I wish we could look deeper into all that Jesus did and how he taught everyone what was involved in being a follower or disciple. That would require reviewing everything he had taught them (Mt 28:20). Instead, let's focus on how he called or selected a few to receive the next level of discipleship

To start with, we know that he was very clear about the cost of following him. This is evident in how he responded to several people who were interested in following him. He told the rich ruler to sell everything and follow him (Lk 18:22). He told another man not to worry about burying his parents (Mt 8:22). There were a few who actually did this. Peter, James, John, and Andrew left everything behind to follow him. So we know he was watching and considering who would be willing to leave everything and able to do so.

He told another one that it could mean living a nomadic life (Mt 8:20). He told him that he had no pillow or place, where he could rest. This in fact became the reality of Jesus' life and ministry. He did not have a place. Because of the crowds he couldn't enter a town and so performed much of his ministry in the countryside. If he did enter a town or house it soon became packed with people. One

example of this was the healing of the paraplegic. To get their friend to Jesus they literally tore a hole in the ceiling and let him down in the midst of the people (Lk 5:19). Again he knew who might do this and be willing and able to live this kind of life.

One of the most difficult challenges he gave to his larger group of disciples was that to follow him one must hate his mother and father (Lk 14:26). The hardest was the statement that if the person truly wanted to be a disciple it meant taking up one's cross daily to follow him (Lk 14:27). He himself paid this price and when his family sought him out he declared that his true family was all those who obeyed his teaching (Mk 3:31-35).

We could continue to review the different encounters Jesus had with people and the different instructions he gave to each person he encountered. The point is that everyone he met was being called to follow Jesus. Everyone was being called to a deeper level of commitment. Note Jesus' remarks:

- The one who hears my word and puts them into practice is a wise man (Mt 7:24; Lk 6:47-48)
- Blessed are those who hear the word and do it (Lk 11:28)

Consider the number of people who did hear and follow Jesus but were not part of the inner group officially designated as disciples. There were over 500 present when Jesus ascended according to Paul in 1 Co 15:6. There were at least 120 gathered together in the upper room when the Holy Spirit descended (Ac 1:15). From this group they decided to replace Judas and complete the number of 12 disciples (Ac 1:21). What is interesting here is that Peter says that this person should be selected from those who had been with the whole time of ministry, from John's baptism until Jesus' ascension (Ac 1:21-22).

The truth is everyone needs to be discipled and we are all called to make disciples. Jesus did everything he could to disciple the people he met. He taught the crowds; he taught individuals; he taught small groups. Besides that he chose a smaller group to focus on and even within that group there were three people with whom he spent extra

time. At one point he had 72 people that he was working with. They did not all remain. According to an event in John a large number of those in that larger group decided they could not accept all of the teaching of Jesus and so they left (Jn 6:66). The truth is, there just isn't enough time for one person to disciple everyone at a more personal level.

What we do know is that Jesus chose 12 from among the larger group to disciple in depth. At different times and places, he called them to join the group following him. A few of them were encouraged to join him by John the Baptist (Jn 1:32). Andrew was one of those. A couple were introduced to Jesus by others, Andrew told Peter (Jn 1:41-42) and Philip told Nathanael (Jn 1:48). This suggests that Jesus knew those he called. They had already joined those interested in following him and at some point, Jesus then selected them for another level of discipleship.

As I say this I still am not sure exactly how he made those decisions. When I consider the nature of the ones he did choose, I often scratch my head. Think about it. He had a head strong person in Peter. One given to rash actions and words. He had the explosive brothers in John and James who flew off the handle at times and were nicknamed the 'sons of thunder'. Then he had a hated tax collector, Matthew alongside a Jewish zealot, Simon. Never a good mix. And he picked Judas, whom he knew would be a thief and a betrayer. Only one of the people he selected seemed appropriate, Nathanael a true son of Israel. The rest are basically unknowns. This is not a group of people we would choose. It has challenge written all over it.

Matthew lists them as part of a specific group that Jesus sent out to proclaim the good news (Mt 10:1-5). Mark states that Jesus called to people he wanted and appointed them to be sent out to preach (Mk 3:13-15). Note that this occurred after Jesus had begun his ministry. Luke states that Jesus spent the night on a mountain in prayer and in the morning he called his disciples to come to him and from them chose the twelve who were also designated as apostles (Lk 6:12-13). So one time he selects 70 to carry out the work and

then he picks the twelve. So clearly he had a plan in mind that guided his selection process.

What becomes clear is that Jesus was discipling many people and busy teaching. At a later point after spending time observing the larger group, he selected 12 for more personal attention. This meant that Jesus knew who they were, what their character was, and how they would respond. Then from this group he selected three to receive greater attention. He selected Peter, James, and John. Each of these would play unique roles in the early church. James would be the first martyr among this group. Peter would preach at Pentecost and be the key person to open the way for the gospel to go to the gentiles. John would be the last to die and would be called on to write Revelation. He would connect the first generation of believers with the next generation.

This pattern would be followed in other settings. There would be a time of becoming acquainted with a group and then key people would be selected for further discipleship and ministry. Here is a list of a few of them.

The deacons – from among the people seven were chosen for this service (Ac 6:5). These people had shown to others that they were trustworthy and capable of this service. The time of training and service opened the way for greater ministry for at least two of them. Stephen became an apologist and a martyr (Ac 6:8-10, Acts 7). Philip was likely the first foreign missionary as he soon travels to Samaria, then to a desert road to meet an Ethiopian and finally settles in Caesarea (Ac 8). We have little information about the others and their ministry. Most of the traditions have them dying as martyrs at different times and places.

Paul was very much involved in the selection of others for training and ministry. There is a long list of people here.

Timothy – he was referred to Paul by the leaders of his church (Ac 16:1-2). Paul had met his family on an earlier trip and when he returned, the leaders encouraged Paul to take Timothy along on his journey. Later he tells Timothy to repeat the process. He is to select

people to train who can repeat the process and train others (2 Ti 2:2).

Aquila and Priscila – Paul met them in Corinth and worked with them in the making of tents (Ac 16:1-4). Later we see them helping him in Ephesus (Ac 18:19). While there they disciplined a man named Apollos (Ac 18:26) and then returned to Rome to continue discipling others (Ro 16:3).

We could also talk about Silas, Luke, Epaphras and many others. Paul made the selection of key people to disciple to be a key part of his ministry. The most evident of these was his time in Ephesus. There he rented a hall and taught/discipled others. These were sent throughout the province of Asia until it was reported that all of Asia had heard the gospel (Ac 19:8-10).

Barnabas is another example of a person who selected people for discipleship and ministry. He selected Paul to join him in Antioch. In this situation it wasn't long before the student became the teacher. Later Barnabas elected Mark for further discipleship even though he had been rejected by Paul because of his failure to persevere in the first missionary journey (Ac 15:37-38). Barnabas effectively disciplined Mark and later Paul saw the change and asked Mark to join him because he saw the change (2 Ti 4:11).

One last thing needs to be mentioned in all of this. As Paul and Barnabas traveled, they taught everyone they met. As a part of this process, they usually identified a group of people who likely received further training and preparation. As a result, they were selected to serve as elders to their churches (Ac 14:21). Paul writes specifically about what is expected of these people and what the results of this level of discipleship should be. He describes these in his description of the qualities to be found in an elder/deacon in Titus 1 and 2 Ti 3. He explains this process to Timothy in 2 Ti 2:2 where he tells Timothy to find those who he can disciple who will then disciple others and so on. The selection of key people for further teaching and discipling was a key element and practice of the early church.

As we close out this section let us consider a few people that were identified and given special attention but were not expected or invited to join Jesus as he traveled. They too received another level of attention. The first is Nicodemus. Jesus took time to meet with him and discuss in greater depth certain aspects of his teaching. This meeting is covered in John chapter 3 and includes the well know verse where Jesus tells us just how much God loved us and the sacrifice he was willing to make. Nicodemus is not given special directions. For a while he remains in the shadows and yet he is clearly watching and listening. He attempts to defend Jesus and is attacked for this (Jn 7:50-52). In the end he is willing to reveal himself as a disciple by assisting in Jesus' burial (Jn 19:39-40).

The next is Joseph of Arimathea. He is listed as a member of the council (Mk 15:43). He asks Pilate for the body of Jesus and he, along with Nicodemus, take on the responsibility of burying Jesus in his tomb. We know nothing of when and how Jesus met him but it must have been significant for Joseph to take such a risk since in this act he declares his opposition to the actions of the Sanhedrin.

There is also the family of Lazarus along with his sisters Mary and Martha. Jesus spends time in their home teaching. He is greatly affected by the death of Lazarus who he then raises from the dead. In the last week of his ministry Jesus is once again in the home of Lazarus. As a result of the raising of Lazarus and his relationship to Jesus the Sanhedrin considers killing him as well. (Lk 10 and John 11, 12 give us a look into the relationship of Jesus to this family.)

We could also talk about Zaccheus. The point of these is that not all the people to whom Jesus gave special attention were traveling with him. What is important to note is that Jesus identified key people to provide another level of teaching and attention.

By now it should be clear that there are two layers to discipleship. One which everyone needs and should receive from each other. Discipling and caring for one another should be as natural and normal as breathing. At the same time, even as we give special attention to certain areas of personal development, we need to be aware that we should become more intimately involved in the

discipleship of a few people. A key purpose of this is developing the leaders who will be responsible to oversee the discipleship process that needs to be part of the life of every follower of Jesus at the same time to prepare others to continue the process for the next generation, and on into the future.

Chapter 3 Knowing them

Jesus spent a great deal of time interacting with the people in their world. His discipleship involved taking the time to know the world around him and the people living in that world. It also meant reflecting on and responding to the many facets of that world and the great variety of people to be found in it. It also meant understanding how each person was impacted by all of the above. This required adapting what he wanted to teach to the context of his listeners.

How many of us even attempt to understand all of what has just been mentioned when we consider the act of discipling others?

Actually, I think we all probably consider it at a subconscious level but that is where it stays. Why? Because if we bring it to a conscious level, it is a bit terrifying and it means we need to deal with the reality of what is involved in the discipling of others. By keeping it at a subconscious level we can avoid being responsible and we can remain uninvolved. We do this by believing it is somehow someone else's responsibility.

We make many excuses to avoid becoming truly part of another person's life and so getting to know them. It is so easy to become caught up in our world, our needs, our issues, and our. . . fill in the blank.

Jesus was the opposite of this. He invested his life in the lives of others. He made himself available. He learned about their world, their need, their frustrations, their reality. It cost him and maybe that is some of what is behind his comment about hating one's family. Because in a real way his commitment to knowing others could easily have made it appear as if he did not care about his family and might not be interested in their needs.

At least that is how it seemed. Especially when his family came to him thinking about rescuing him from what they considered to be insanity. This commitment to caring for others was beyond them and so they came. When he was told of their presence, he declared that his family was all those who chose to obey his teaching. So to his family and to others it would look like he had indeed abandoned them and denied them, in essence hating his own family. But I question that conclusion based on the care and concern he had for his mother as he was dying on the cross. He could easily have been caught up in the pain and the desolation of being denied and abandoned. Instead, he revealed that he did care for his family as well. He provided for the care of his mother even as he was dying. It is not that he didn't care about them, but that his concern had to be adapted to a greater need.

So let us delve into what it means to get to know the people we would like to build up in the Faith. What did Jesus do so that he could disciple the ones he met and to go deeper with his inner circle. What can we learn from all the stories and parables about his way of discipling. In what ways was it so different from that of other teachers or masters?

In the field and on the road--

Samaritan woman (Jn 4) – there was only one place to meet this woman and that was to take the unacceptable road through

Samaria. The disciples would have objected but Jesus knew why he was going to take that road. Then he allows the disciples to go into the nearby village to find food. Why? The woman was unlikely to come to the well with a crowd of men around. He also knew just what to say to her and what would pique her interest. Living water and an unlimited supply would draw her in. Step by step he then led her to be willing to deal with the truth about herself and about God. Her response drew the whole town to the well to hear what this man had to say. What is critical is that he understood her world, its theology, and its context.

The lepers (Lk 17:12-19) – Jesus knew that the only way to meet this group of people was to go to where they were. He knew they would not, actually could not come to him. The story says they came to him but if he had not chosen that particular route they could not have come near enough for Jesus to hear them shouting. He also knew that for them to reenter society they needed to present themselves to the priest who could declare them clean. Their need was not just to be healed but to be restored as well. Even more interesting is that the one who came back, and thanked Jesus was not a Jew. He was a foreigner, a Samaritan. He could not go to the priest. Why? Samaritans were pariahs and not allowed in the temple and any wise priest would not even speak to him except at great need. So this command had little purpose for him. Did Jesus know this? Of course he did. He knew he was a Samaritan. This suggests that he either talked to them for a bit or knew about them and who they were. He had taken time at some point to know who they were and what their needs were.

Peter (Lk 5:1-6) – Jesus had met Peter at some prior point. So he knew Peter was a fisherman. Matthew says that Jesus went out from the town and sat by the lake (Mt 13:1). One could ask if Jesus intentionally picked a spot near Peter's boat and then moved the crowd closer and closer to the shore and to the boat of Peter as he taught them. Jesus most likely knew something about fishing and was aware that part of the reason Peter was so close to the shore was that it had been a profitless night of fishing. So why did Peter agree to try one more time? He says that because if Jesus told him

to, he would do it. People don't respond that way unless there is a reason to do what someone asks them to do. Jesus knew the man and knew how to reach him. All this led to Peter agreeing to abandon all to follow Jesus.

There are many more stories like this. Stories about Jesus being in the right place at the right time. About him being available to those who needed him. Keep in mind that when Jesus asked a question it was not only about obtaining information but also about allowing those he met to verbalize what was in their heart and what they needed.

In the town –

When I say in the town I am mainly referring to what happened when Jesus entered someone's house. Let's take time to review a few of them.

House of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) – so here is an outcast wanting to see Jesus. A man who desperately wants to talk to Jesus but knows he would not be allowed to do so. Knowing all of this he still decides that whatever it takes he is going to at least see Jesus. So being a short man he climbs a tree. Think about that. A grown man, a despised man, placing himself in the ridiculous position of climbing a tree like some kid just to see Jesus. What is more interesting to me is that Jesus knows his name. Did he see Zacchaeus at some point as he walked through the town? Did he take time to ask others his name? Did Jesus know there was a tree on that path that Zacchaeus could climb? Whatever the answers to those questions may be, Jesus knew his name and called him down with the instructions that he planned to go to Zacchaeus house and spend time with him. By the time the dinner is over whatever Jesus has said has impacted the heart of Zacchaeus. Jesus knows what to say to this man and the man heard those words and responded.

House of Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14-15) – I like this story because it is about a woman who has guests in her house and because she is sick she cannot fulfill her role as a host. There is no conversation here but it is clear that Jesus knew the importance of a

hostess being able to care for her guests. He sees the situation, sees her and knows what she needs. She needs to fulfill her role to feel good about Jesus being in her house. So Jesus heals her and she does just that. She immediately begins to care for her guests. Until that responsibility is taken care of she will not be able to listen to what he is saying.

Wedding at Cana (Jn 2) – house of Jairus (Mk 5) – These two stories are related. They are about knowing the need of a person and responding to that need first. Any attempt to teach or disciple would be lost until that need was dealt with. He provides the wine at the wedding. Only a few knew what had happened. It was enough. He did not need public recognition, which would have ruined the moment. He knew the more important need was helping the man avoid the shame that might have followed when the wine ran out at an inopportune moment.

House of Jairus (Mk 5) -- In relation to Jairus and his wife the real need was their daughter. No amount of words or counsel would have any meaning until their daughter was care for. I am going to make a large leap here. Dare I suggest that this may have been their only child? There is nothing in the text to suggest this nor deny it. But I wonder. No matter. Jesus knew their need and responded.

Visit of Nicodemus (Jn 3) – Jesus takes time to meet this leader, a member of the Sanhedrin . Jesus' conversation with this man indicates knowledge of the man, his beliefs, and the man's knowledge of God's word. The conversation is profound and challenging. Jesus knows where the man is in his ability to believe and has the right words to help him go deeper and eventually believe. I say this because at one time Nicodemus questions the action of the Sanhedrin, for which he is attacked, and later helps in the burial of Jesus' body. This was an action that would be clearly in defiance of the actions and decision of the Sanhedrin.

There are many more stories of how Jesus responded to those who invited him to their homes. Each one clearly deals with some critical issue of those present, and demonstrating the fact that Jesus knew

their needs and concerns. Also note that he was willing to enter their homes and take time to know them better so he could have a greater opportunity to disciple, even those who opposed him.

I would encourage you to take time to review each of these encounters and see how Jesus responded to each one. Also consider what teaching may be part of that event and how it likely reflected the fact that Jesus knew the people he was talking to. The fact is that in one way or another Jesus took time to know the people he was teaching and discipling.

Early Church--

We see this truth practiced in the early church as well. Let us look at a few of the more obvious ones.

Barnabus – There are two times when Barnabus is deeply involved in guiding others. His choices are based on the knowledge of the people and the context.

Saul/Paul (Acts 11) – Barnabus had been sent to Antioch to review the situation there and then report back. He went but instead of reporting back immediately we are told he went in search of Saul. That is interesting at a number of levels. His time in Antioch revealed a need that he was going to have to have help in fulfilling. He also likely met Saul in the early days after his conversion and so knew Saul's abilities. Barnabus makes the choice to go in search of Saul and bring him back to Antioch. This opened the way for a year of critical teaching and prepared the two of them to be sent out as the first missionaries.

Mark (Acts 13,15) – Mark joins Barnabus and Saul, now called Paul. Sadly, he deserts them part way through the journey. When they plan a return trip Barnabus and Paul split over giving Mark another chance. Paul takes Silas. Barnabus takes Mark. Barnabus saw something in Mark that Paul didn't and invested in his life. Years later Paul sees the difference and changes his mind about Mark.

Paul (Acts 18) – Aquila/Priscilla – This relationship starts as a business arrangement. Paul understands the world of tentmaking, and they agree to partner with him. Over time we see them moving out on their own. Paul has entered their world and helped them grow, so they can become part of the larger ministry.

Church – Timothy (Acts 16) – The church in Lystra has invested in the life of Timothy and they see how he has grown and believe he could be an asset to Paul. Paul is aware of this and has taken time to get to know Timothy, his family, and his background. We see this in the letters he writes to Timothy. His letters to Timothy and Titus cover similar materials but in different ways reflecting a personal knowledge of the two.

Letters of Paul, James, John, and Peter – They all reflect a knowledge of the people to whom they were written. They write to specific churches and groups of people. The words they choose and the topics they cover all reflect this one important idea. They have taken the time to get to know the people to whom they are writing. That means they have invested the time necessary to learn about their lives, the issues they deal with, and what they need if they are to continue to grow in their faith and in their relationship with Jesus.

Knowing people is not simply learning their name, their address, and other facts. It is about spending time with them to learn how they respond to the world around them. It is about discovering their likes, dislikes, struggles, and strengths. You cannot accomplish this in a casual encounter. You have to be ready to live in their world and let them be part of your world. When that happens then discipleship becomes a reality and not just a word.

Chapter 4 Teaching with Authority

In some ways this will be a repeat of some of the material of the previous chapter. It makes sense. As we look at the

concept of teaching we will see both the relationships and the differences between teaching and knowing

To do so I will not repeat the outline of the previous chapter, but follow another path and let the knowing material reappear when it is relevant.

First we need to understand the authority that we have been given to do the work of discipleship. So let's look at a few scriptures and set the stage for what follows as it relates to our responsibility to teach or make a person a disciple of Jesus.

First a definition. What does the word disciple mean?

Webster's - a disciple is "a pupil or follower of any teacher or school."^[i] A true disciple is not just a student or a learner, but a follower: one who applies what he has learned.

Discipleship.org – discipleship includes three key elements in its definition. Notice the three key characteristics of a disciple: He/she follows Jesus. He/she is being changed by Jesus. He/she is committed to the mission of Jesus.

Wikipedia - This term is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels and Acts. In the ancient world, a disciple is a follower or adherent of a teacher. Discipleship is not the same as being a student in the modern sense. A disciple in the ancient biblical world actively imitated both the life and teachings of the master.

For this type of discipleship to occur there needs to be a level of authority in the teaching given that convinces the person being taught that they need to change and commit themselves to what is being taught.

We see the evidence for this in the comments of those who heard Jesus teach.

- Matt 7:28-29 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.
- Matt 8:8-9 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
- Matt 9:8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.
- Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.
- Mark 1:27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching — and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits, and they obey him."

This is a sample of the comments that we find in the gospels. The people recognized the authority they heard in Jesus' teaching and saw the evidence of it in his actions and the results of those actions.

Jesus then authorized those who were called his disciples to both teach and provide the evidence of their authority to do so.

- Matt 10:1 He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

- Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.
- Luke 9:1-2 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Some might say that only the 12 were given this authority. There were others that were sent out besides the 12 for he also sent out 72 in Lk 10:1. That they were given authority is seen in their comment about how demons obey them in verse 17. Also, just before Jesus ascends into heaven, he makes the following declaration which is given in the presence of over 500 people.

- Matt 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

That is not the only time Jesus talked about the authority they would have. On several occasions he talked about their authority in forgiving sins.

- John 20:23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
- Matt 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

- Matt 18:18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

At the same time, he warns them about misusing this authority. He tells them that if they abuse this authority and refuse to forgive, there will be consequences. The father will not forgive them their sins

- Matt 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
- Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

It is clear that Jesus gave the key leaders a great deal of authority at many levels. When he sent them out they were authorized to teach what they had heard and announce the coming of the kingdom of God. They were to prepare people to hear the gospel and were given authority to preach, teach, heal, and authority over demons (Mk 6:7-11; Lk 9:1-6; Lk 10:1-17)

The question then arises as to whether those who heard these words believed that they had the authority to carry out the teaching given them.

Yes, they did, and there are two levels of evidence for this. One level is found in how others perceived them and what they taught. This is seen in the response of the people to what is being taught. People believed and were baptized. This is in spite of the opposition of the leaders. This is also seen in the response of the leaders and their opposition. They commented that this group of uneducated people had clearly been with Jesus and were acting in accordance with what they had been

taught (Ac 4:13). It is also seen in the willingness of these people to defy the authority of the Sanhedrin and continue to proclaim the teaching that they had received.

- Acts 4:19-20 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. 20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."
- Acts 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

And this in spite of being jailed, beaten, and threatened.

It is also seen in the focus given to teaching and being taught. We are told that those who believed gathered daily.

- Acts 2:46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.
- Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

We see the extension of this commitment in the lives of the deacons. Though they were called to deal with the distribution of food it is clear that teaching others and with authority was a part of their ministry as well. Stephen was a great apologist and defender of the new faith (Ac 6:8-10). Philip launched the work in Samaria (Ac 8:5-12).

This is only the beginning. We see that in this concept of teaching; they had the authority of Jesus. This is reflected in the letters of Paul.

- 1 Thess 4:2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.
- 2 Cor 10:8 For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it.

- Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- Titus 2:15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

By now it should be clear that we have been given the authority to teach and disciple others so that they will become true followers of Jesus. The next question is the content of what we teach. We find that answer in the last verse of Matthew 28 where it says we are to teach them everything he has taught them.

That word ‘everything’ is a vast word. I say this because we in reality don’t have everything that Jesus said recorded for us to review and teach. Even John in his gospel declared there was not enough space in the world to contain the whole of it.

- John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

John admits he was selective in what he recorded, and the focus was so that they would believe and be saved (Jn 20:31). We also know that the teaching of Jesus did not simply relate to his life and ministry but covered the entire teaching of the Old Testament. We see this in the comment about the discussion Jesus had with the two men on the road to Emmaus where he reviewed all of the scriptures and what it had to say about the Messiah (Lk 24:27).

From this it is clear that we are to teach all of God’s word and especially its fulfillment in Jesus. The apostles knew this, and the evidence is that they took this seriously. Note the amount of quotes from Jesus’ words and from much of the Old

Testament which we see within the gospels and their letters. That is the true basis of our teaching and the authority we have to do so. The authority of God's word.

How do we carry out this teaching? In the same way Jesus did. He taught people wherever he encountered them. In their homes (Zacchaeus), along the roads (10 lepers, in the temple (holy week), at their place of work (Peter), open fields (Sermon on the mount), and the list of the places where he met people and taught them goes on and on.

When he taught them is as diverse as the places where he taught them. He taught them in times of suffering (death of Lazarus), in times of celebration (wedding of Cana), in public and in private, during meals (observing where people seated themselves). And so on.

How he taught them again is filled with variety.. He used parables (so many examples), stories (the prodigal son), history (fall of the tower that killed a number of people), hyperbole (rip out your eye to prevent sin), and sayings and play on words (golden rule). He both asked questions (who do you say I am) and answered questions (what must I do to enter heaven). He used visual illustrations, using a child to illustrate faith – Mt 18:1-4 or the widow's mite to illustrate true giving – Mk 12-41-44. He was also not afraid to repeat his teachings. He discussed his coming death and resurrection on many occasions. He also talked about what it meant to be great in the kingdom of God on different occasions and in different settings. A great part of his teaching also included the opportunity to practice what they were being taught as in the sending out of the 12, the sending out the seventy, and the challenge to the rich ruler to sell all, give it to the poor and then follow him. Lastly and most importantly Jesus lived and practiced what he taught.

All of these involve knowledge of the ones being taught and a readiness to be part of their world so they could hear and see the teaching lived out before their eyes.

Finally, we need to keep in mind that no one was excluded or ignored in the plan to teach. Jesus wanted the children to come and learn and rebuked the disciples when they sought to prevent them from coming. Jesus took time to teach women, something that was not normally done in those days. He taught the outcasts, lepers, blind people, Samaritans, tax collectors, and prostitutes. He taught people of all social levels. He taught the Pharisees and Sadducees even though very few of them wanted to accept his teaching. Still, he tried and those events provided teaching opportunities for those listening. He taught laborers, employees, employers, and the unemployed. He taught the enemy, at least one roman soldier heard Jesus' teaching and responded with an understanding of faith and obedience few others had demonstrated.

Jesus gave us the pattern for teaching and it was not like the other teachers. It was built around the people and their realities and needs. It was built on the authority of God's word and not the interpretation of human teachers. As the people commented, it was with authority and it was designed so they could understand and follow.

But to do this one needs to become a student of God's word. One needs to breathe in the living word so they can live by it and be able to share that life. That is when teaching/discipling becomes powerful and life changing. That is when we can teach everything Jesus taught.

Chapter 5 Involved them – participation

One of the most critical parts of any good plan of training and preparation are the practicums. Those times when you are expected to put what you have learned to use.

They come in many forms.

Research – you may think this is about obtaining information but more importantly it is about learning to use critical tools and finding the resources you need to gain the information being sought.

They can be in the form of **experiments** – this is an important part of subjects like chemistry, psychology, and other sciences, where we need to set up a way to prove an hypothesis or discover a pattern for what we are observing.

They can be essays, poems and **other types of writing** – These are about discovering if you have the ability to use what you have learned and can use those tools to express clearly what you have learned or how it can be applied to other topics.

They can be **challenges** – Complete this set of objectives in a given timeframe or location. These are often part of athletics, sports, and other types of physical activity, but they can be used in many other areas as well.

They can be **structural** – this applies to a couple of different areas. One is in the area of engineering and design. This covers so many areas and types of work, for example hydraulics, civil engineering, architecture, etc. Another key area is the ability to plan and organize events, programs, curriculums, and the like.

I could go on. The key concept is that for teaching to be effective there needs to be the opportunity to actually use what is being learned. It also involves a factor of trust. Why do I

say this? Because turning over responsibility and resources to the student always involves risk. Mistakes can and will be made and someone will have to deal with any damage caused. Not all practice can be accomplished without some sort of risk, especially the risk of failure. Resources can be wasted or lost or not used as intended. (The parable of the talents highlights aspects of this. Mt 25).

Sometimes we work to create a safe place for this to occur. Sometimes we use known settings and items so that a certain level of success is guaranteed. Sometimes the risk to the students and to those around them is real. Each teacher needs to understand all of this and choose wisely so that a minimum of risk is involved, a relatively high probability of success is present, and that whatever the outcome the ability to learn what has been taught grows.

Jesus clearly involved those around him. We see this primarily in the fact that he sent out the 12 (Lk 9) and the 72 (Lk 10) to carry out specific tasks. The tasks were based on his life, his example, and under his authority. In each case Jesus gave clear directions about what they were to do. First, they were to announce the coming of the kingdom of God. Second, they were given power to heal. Third, they were also given authority over demons. All of these were things they had seen Jesus do, heard his teaching about, and were authorized to do in a particular setting and time. We are told that Jesus sent them out to places that he intended to visit as well. A good teacher always has a way to follow up or evaluate the work that has been given.

It will be helpful to review a number of the different settings where people were given tasks to do by those in authority over them and/or responsible for discipling them. Sometimes the

assignment is for a specific time and place. At other times it is the basis of a larger timeframe and more extensive ministry.

Wedding in Cana – One might say this does not fit in with what we are discussing here but it does show us a pattern that becomes a common part of involving others in the work. In this story there is a shortage of wine. Jesus' mother has an awareness that her son can resolve the issue. He is resistant but finally concedes her point and acts. He involves others in the process. In this case a group of unsuspecting servants. They are told to get jars and fill them with water. That is normal and they comply with this request. Then comes the more difficult direction. They are to take from these jars and serve the guests as if what they were serving was in fact wine.

Now for some background that may have helped those serving to obey the directions of Jesus. We are told that Jesus is there, and his disciples are with him. This suggests that Jesus has begun his ministry and that he has performed miracles of many types. It also means that the disciples have begun to learn to follow his directions and so could easily be a source of encouragement to the servants to follow the strange request.

Whatever hesitation may have existed it is overcome, and they serve the water, now wine, to the guests. They are now privy to what has happened. They know the source of the wine is the jars of water. What a lesson! It is also a good lesson for us as disciple makers. It is about the level of confidence that we create in those we are discipling. Do they trust our directions and follow them, even when they don't understand all the reasons for them? Will they obey knowing that they will eventually understand?

Feeding of the five thousand – In this story the disciples are concerned that the crowd that has been with them for possibly several days has run out of food and is now hungry. The

disciples want Jesus to do the normal thing, send them away so the people can find food.

Now comes the lesson. Jesus tells them to find the food and feed the people. The disciples are rightfully upset. They know the numbers. They know how many people there are and what it would take to feed them. They know they don't have enough in the treasury for such an exercise. In the middle of this, one of them finds a boy with some fish and bread. (Interesting that amongst this crowd there was a small boy who was prepared.) They bring him to Jesus but still cannot see. Their faith needs to be stretched.

Jesus takes the fish and bread, prays and starts to break them up. What happens next is a miracle, and not just one but twelve. I don't know where the baskets came from but the disciples found them and then began to distribute the fish and bread. They watched as the baskets never ran out. They watched as the crowd was fed. They saw the 12 full baskets of leftover fish and bread.

Keep in mind that no one would have benefited from this unless the disciples chose to take those baskets and distribute the food. Nothing would have happened if they didn't take what was given and bring it to others.

Truthfully, we will never learn all that is possible until we become actively involved. It is not until we put into practice what we are taught that we will see all that is possible. In the same way those we disciple will not learn all the riches of what they are learning until they, in obedience, put it into practice in their lives. A key part of that is learning to act in faith, believing God will supply what we lack.

Feeding of the four thousand – this is quite similar to the feeding of the five thousand. There are some details that are

different. The key aspect of this is the idea of repetition. Sometimes we need to provide more than one opportunity to practice for a lesson to be truly learned. Jesus emphasized this when he asks the disciples to review these two events as part of another time of teaching. (See Mk 8:14-21)

Sending of 72 and 12 – This has been mentioned above and is a key example of this concept of providing opportunities to use what is being learned in real time. As mentioned, they were given specific instructions and the authority to carry out the assignment given.

They were successful and were excited about the success they experienced. Jesus uses that to help them keep a critical point in focus. Successful accomplishment of a task is always exciting, but more important is our obedience to the one sending us. The greater victory is not in the results, though it is what we hope for, instead it is in being approved by God and faithful to Him, no matter what the results. It is this that will bring the better and more permanent results of change in our lives and the lives of others. Miracles are temporary and will not save your soul.

Jesus would illustrate this by his death on the cross. This would appear as a failure and yet that act of obedience opened the way for our forgiveness and restoration. The evidence of this is in fact that Jesus conquered the grave.

Deacons – This event was a critical point of development in the early church. It showed the willingness of the apostles to involve others in the ministry and care of the young church. They handed over a key area of responsibility to others which would allow them to continue to focus on teaching and discipling. What is also important is how several of these deacons also became involved in ministry outside of “waiting on tables”, so to speak.

Two of them are highlighted in Acts. First is the story of **Stephen**. He became the first apologist, one who defends the faith. His ability to reason and explain was powerful. So much so that the religious leaders could not win the argument. Their solution was to make him the first martyr and as a result caused the church to spread even faster. The believers scattered and everywhere they went they proclaimed the good news. It is likely they learned much about how to do so as a result of watching and hearing Stephen.

The other one discussed in Acts is **Philip**. He opens the way for the Samaritans to hear the gospel. He then meets the Ethiopian eunuch on a desert road and shows him the way to forgiveness. He is then sent to another place where once again he serves. Much later we encounter him, and we are told that his daughters are prophetesses. His selection to serve has opened the door to many others and has also born fruit in his own family.

Barnabas - This is another person worthy of mention in this period of the church. Though not one of the deacons he has a prominent place in the development of the early church and of a key leader. He is mentioned as a generous man who sells a piece of land and donates the money to the church. He is also a key person in discipling Paul. I say this because it is he that brings Paul to the apostles after Paul's conversion. He becomes the bridge that opens the way for Paul's acceptance and future ministry. Later it is Barnabas that seeks out Paul and brings him to Antioch to help with the work there.

At a later date it is Barnabas that works with Mark and restores him. Remember Mark abandoned them during the first missionary journey. Barnabas and Paul separated over whether to take Mark on the next journey. Barnabas continues to disciple Mark and later Paul sees the change this has

produced. Paul now sees Mark as useful and asks him to come and join him in the work.

Paul – Most of the examples of discipleship and involving others in the work come from Paul. He involves many in the work. He includes them in the work and then assigns them work to carry out. Here are a few of these.

Timothy and Silas – They are sent to Thessalonica after Paul is driven from the town. Paul goes on to Athens and anxiously awaits their report.

Timothy – Paul accepts Timothy as a member of the team. He sends Timothy to carry out specific tasks in various places. The first is to represent Paul in Corinth. He is later sent by Paul to Macedonia to continue the work there. Paul gives us a great picture of what is involved in this stage of discipling. He gives Timothy detailed instructions on the work to be done. What is also evident from the two letters is that there is some level of communication between them and so Paul is able to expand on his instructions to Timothy. Another important aspect of discipling and involving those we are discipling is the ability to have feedback and interaction on areas of concern.

Titus – He has traveled with Paul at different times. He is with Paul in Ephesus and is sent to Corinth to collect the offering. He is later sent by Paul to Crete to provide leadership to the church there. Again, we have an opportunity to see what is involved in this process in the letter Paul writes to Titus regarding the work he expects Titus to carry out. Later he joins Paul in Rome and is sent on an errand to Dalmatia.

There are many more examples of Paul involving others in ministry. We could talk about Aquila and Priscilla. They worked with Paul in Corinth and Ephesus and then we see

them again in Rome. There is the long list of associates and friends found in the last chapter of Romans. We can also infer that Paul sent out many people throughout Asia during his time of teaching and discipling while living in Ephesus. I say this because of the comment that during that time all of Asia was reached with the gospel and from the letter to the church in Colosi, a place he had never visited, and the mention of Epaphras who is from that church. We could talk about Tychicus as well. So many people. Paul disciplined and sent many.

If we are going to be effective in discipling others, then we need to make sure we provide them with opportunities to put into practice what they are learning. As part of that we need to provide clear guidelines for what is expected of them Jesus did this for the 72 and the twelve. He also revised those instructions in anticipation of the changes that would occur after his death and resurrection. Paul did the same and we see the evidence of that in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

The final aspect of this process is to allow a time of **reporting and evaluation**. Jesus did this with the ones he sent and in that process helped them to focus on what was most important. Paul does this as well. Sometimes his comments are severe as in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander who shipwrecked their faith. Paul states that he has handed them over to Satan (1 Ti 1:19-20), a very severe evaluation. More often they were positive and encouraging.

Keep in mind that for the involvement to be effective in providing for growth it has to be activity that has a purpose and of value. Busy work is not involvement. Those we include in the work need to see their participation has value and purpose.

Chapter 6 Evaluation

In any training program there is always the need for evaluation. Then, following the evaluation, a process of encouragement or correction depending on the results of the evaluation process. In some cases, there may be a need for review of key aspects depending on the results of the evaluation process. The process of evaluation can also identify gaps in the teaching process, areas of weakness that need to be addressed, and clarify where there may be a lack of comprehension of what is being taught.

The process of evaluation is not something that people look forward to. Teachers don't enjoy preparing the tests and doing the evaluation. Students don't like having to take tests or being evaluated. Some people say there is no need for tests and that observation of the student is enough. Truthfully, that is a form of testing and evaluation, which requires checking to see if the student has in fact gained the knowledge and skills necessary to be approved in that area. You cannot escape this. one way or another every student is evaluated and so graded.

Paul uses an interesting phrase in his letter to Timothy where he states that Timothy is to work hard to be a workman who is approved and capable of correctly handling the word of God (2 Ti 2:15). In the letter to the Romans, he talks about how people who serve according to certain standards are pleasing to God and approved by men (14:18). In chapter 16 verse 10 he makes this even more specific by identifying a man Apollos as one who has been tested and approved.

Clearly, we cannot simply assume that because we have taught them the word of God that they have successfully understood all they have been taught and will be able to do the same for the next generation. Paul tells Timothy to be careful in this process. First, he is to evaluate those around him and select those who are ready to be taught. Second, he is to evaluate them on their capacity to repeat the process for the next generation of believers (2 Ti 2:2). Jesus in his

prayer in John 17 has this focus in mind when he states that his focus is not just on praying for the disciples but also for those who will believe through their message (Jn 17:20). The evaluation is that they will do the work and others will believe.

Evaluation is a challenge and can reveal the failures of the teacher as well as the failures of the students. This is part of the reason we don't enjoy the process. Also to be honest, no teacher is perfect in this process. Well, there was one perfect teacher, Jesus. Still, Jesus allowed for misunderstanding on the part of those being taught. This meant that Jesus spent time evaluating those he taught. He did this by testing, reviewing, and correcting the disciples and others.

Jesus evaluated those he taught. Some were evaluated harshly because they were not listening. More than that when they did listen, they did not hear what was being taught. They chose not accept the teaching nor the evaluation of their actions. Jesus was especially hard on this group and his correction of their errors and refusal to learn were clear and hard to escape.

Another critical factor is that we are not dealing with those who have rejected the truth. We are dealing with people who have chosen to follow Jesus. Some of these people will struggle with what they are being taught. They will struggle with the evaluation of them as a person and as a follower of Jesus. That is not unusual. I would suggest that each person, at one point, passed through a stage where they were resistant to what they were being taught. If that moment was handled correctly, then they overcame their resistance and were able to move forward. I believe Peter was such a person.

Saul was also a person who was resistant to the truth. His resistance prevented him from hearing the truth until he was confronted by the Lord. That meeting resulted in a singular change in the direction of Saul who was renamed Paul. Saul's main problem was a misinterpretation of the truth that he had accepted. Once this error was corrected, he became Paul and was used by God to open the

way for the gospel to reach the Gentiles as well as provide critical teaching for the church then and now.

Now let's return to the ministry of Jesus and the process of evaluation. Jesus was always ready to evaluate how the disciples were doing. He also evaluated the responses of those who chose not to believe. In this material our focus is on those who have chosen to follow Jesus.

When Jesus saw an opportunity to evaluate and review, he used it and then, if necessary, corrected any error that was identified in the process. Before we continue it may be useful to examine how evaluation is done.

First there is the testing process. Tests take several forms. First of these is the simple answer test

1. True and false questions – here the idea is that you should be able to know what is true and false based on what you have been taught. This is the most basic form of testing.
2. Multiply choice – in this type of testing you are given several options to choose from . This will test whether you have learned the content of what has been taught. Multiple choice options always contain the answer within the choices presented.
3. Fill in the blank – this is like the multiple choice except that in this case you are not given options to choose from. Instead, you have to provide the answer. Again, it is a test of whether you have learned the content.

The next comes short answer and essay.

1. Short answer – A question is given for which you must give an answer. The answer usually includes an explanation, definition, or application aspect. This is to discover if you know more than just the basic information and have some understanding of the content behind it.
2. Essay question – these are like the short answer but longer. The student is expected to develop in a more complete way

the content; and thereby show the level of their comprehension and capacity to apply the knowledge gained. There can be different types of these essays. There are many kinds of these. Here are a few types of essays.

- a. Analysis
- b. Application
- c. Evaluation
- d. Compare and contrast

The next is the practicum. These usually involve the use of the material learned in a particular setting. As above there are different types of these.

1. Experiment – a student is given the opportunity to use the knowledge and duplicate it in a laboratory setting or in some type of context where there is clear control of the process. The goal is to duplicate exactly as possible what has been taught.
2. Application – the student is allowed to apply what they have learned to a real life setting and see if the results of what is being tested support what they have learned.
3. Investigation – in this case the knowledge is used to explore and learn. The final results are unknown. What is known is the process and content. This information is then applied to a setting which is then studied to determine how the subjects responded.

Again, there are many types of practicums. All of them have this focus: the application of the knowledge gained to a given setting in order to see if the student understands the material and how to use it in a variety of ways. Each has the purpose of testing the student's proficiency in the use and application of the training received.

I am sure there are more types of tests, but this is enough to help us realize that testing is a part of many aspects of life. Even when we are finally approved and have a job there will be more evaluation. The better we do the more responsibility we will be given, the higher our approval rating will be and what we all hope for is greater

benefits. Keep in mind that what I have just reviewed is more from the perspective of the world and how it does evaluation. It also is from the perspective of advancement and the benefits from that advancement. Now it is time to turn our attention to how this might work in discipleship.

So how did Jesus use the evaluation process and testing as part of his discipling process? To answer this question let's look at some of the times when Jesus did just that. These were times when he evaluated and tested the disciples and others. Hopefully as we look at these, we will learn more about how evaluation and testing are an integral part of the discipling process.

One of the most common ways he evaluated them was by creating situations where he could observe their responses. This could be in the form of an activity on his part or something that he asked them to do. It might be in the form of a question that he asked them. It could also be how he responded to something that they did or said. We will review these in no specific order.

Jesus washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-10) – This was a significant test. Jesus wanted them to learn about true servanthood and so he took on the role of the lowliest servant in a household, the one assigned to wash peoples' feet. Peter's response reveals the struggle this created. Their master, their teacher, was on his knees washing their filthy, unclean feet. Peter could not accept this. His response opened the door to a deeper teaching on what true leadership and servanthood are in the kingdom of God.

Jesus' delay in responding to the information that Lazarus was sick – When Jesus arrived, all the sisters could see was that he was too late. In their minds their brother would still be alive if he had only arrived sooner. Jesus tests their knowledge of who he is and their faith in that truth. It was also a test about trusting that God knows what we need and when he should respond to our need.

Jesus walking on the water (Mt 14:21-33) – Jesus had just fed the 5000 and decided to send the disciples away while he went to the mountain to pray. The next part of the story is a form of test. Jesus decides to walk across the sea to meet the disciples. What is interesting is that he chooses a route that passes close to the disciples. Why? He could have avoided them and not created the situation that occurred. This created concern and fear. Jesus declares that it is in fact him and not a ghost. Peter challenges this and so Jesus tests him. He says come and walk on the water with me. Peter manages a few steps and then takes his eyes off of Jesus and begins to sink. Jesus takes his hand, and they enter the boat. Besides that, the storm that was raging calmed instantly.

Jesus tests their ability to believe what he says and their faith that he can make the impossible happen when necessary. He accepts Peter's challenge to prove who he is.

Jesus telling the disciples to provide food for the multitude on two different occasions – Jesus is testing their understanding of what is possible. Their response is one of people bound to a limited concept of what is possible. They can only think of the cost and the difficulty of obtaining enough food for such a crowd. They are amazed when they see what happens but are not able to translate what is possible from one event to the next. Both times they could only see the number of people, and the remoteness of the location and so in their minds it was not possible to feed this crowd with what they had or could buy.

Later when Jesus is talking about the yeast of their teaching all they can think of is that they had not bought enough bread and were being judged. He has to remind them of all that had been done to feed the multitudes. (Mt 16:9-10)

Jesus question regarding the people killed when the tower fell (Lk 13:1-5) – This world is filled with unexpected disasters and events. He uses two events to test their understanding of how God works in this world and brings about judgment. Bad things happen. So not

everything that happens is caused by God, nor represents the judgment of the person or persons affected.

Jesus asking the disciples who the people thought he was and their own thoughts about who he was. (Mt 16:15; Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20) – Jesus tests what his followers believe by asking what others believe. They give those answers. Then he asks what they think. They declare that he is the Son of God.

The discussion of how hard it would be for a rich man to enter heaven (Mt 19:24-26; Mk 10:22-27) – Jesus has just had a conversation with a wealthy person about giving away everything to enter the kingdom of God and his comment that it is almost impossible for a rich person to enter heaven. The disciples are shocked and ask who then can be saved. Jesus declares that with man it is not possible but with God all things are possible.

In Mark this is followed by the comment of Peter about how they have left everything. Jesus uses this comment to tell them how God will provide a hundred times what has been sacrificed.

James and John's request to be seated at the right and left of Jesus in the kingdom (Mk 10:35-45) – James and John ask to have the seats of honor in the kingdom. Jesus queries them about whether they can drink the cup he must drink and pass through the baptism or test he will pass through. They say they can though they do not know what lies ahead. Jesus uses this request and his question to teach them about who will be honored in the kingdom of God.

Jesus response to Thomas' doubt (Jn 20:29) – Jesus has appeared to the 10 and others after his resurrection. Thomas refuses to believe until he himself has touched the body of Christ. Jesus appears and challenges him. Thomas declares that he finally believes. Jesus tells them that true belief is not based on what we can see but true belief is based on knowing God.

Jesus' testing of Peter after the resurrection (Jn 21:1-19) – Peter betrayed the Lord and Jesus appears and tests the truth of Peter's love for him. It is a hard test but necessary to restore Peter and remove the shame of his betrayal. In this event Jesus three times asks Peter about how much he loves the Lord. In each question and answer more is learned about how to serve the Lord in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus meeting with Nicodemus (Jn 3) – Here Jesus makes a number of statements that cause responses and comments on the part of Nicodemus. Jesus uses these tests of Nicodemus knowledge and belief to open the way for a deeper teaching about how one enters the kingdom of God and explain what God is doing.

These are only a few examples of how Jesus used events, comments, and actions to evaluate and test the knowledge of the disciples as well as the level of their belief and faith in him.

Now let's look at this concept in the life of the early church. There are several of these.

Selection of Deacons (Ac 6:1-6).– When the work of caring for the needs of the growing church became too great, they selected a group of men whom they approved for this work. The approval was based on the fact that they were full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.

Philip and the work in Samaria (Ac 8:4-25) – As a result of the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip one of the deacons, left Jerusalem and began a work in Samaria. The work was very successful, and the apostles sent Peter and John to review what was being done. All was good and they returned to Jerusalem.

Antioch (11:19-25) – A group of people who had been scattered by the persecution began a work in Antioch. The apostles sent Barnabus to review the situation. He was satisfied with what he found and went and called Saul to join him.

Paul meets with key leaders (Ga 2:1-2) – Paul travels to Jerusalem to talk to key leaders to verify their approval of the work he was doing among the gentiles.

Paul's letters to the Corinthians (2 Co 2:9) – Here he states that he wrote to them to test them and see if they would be obedient.

Church leaders (1Ti 3:10) – Paul tells Timothy that they must be tested and approved before they can serve. Paul gives us lists of requirements in Timothy and Titus to help in this process of evaluation.

It is evident that the concept of evaluation and testing is present and an active part of the approval of those who will be serving in the church. Also, we can see that there are clear ideas about how to evaluate and test those who were involved in leadership. This is clearly seen in the selection of the seven deacons and Paul's lists in Timothy and Titus.

In the process of discipleship there will come a time we will need to test the ones we disciple. We will need to listen closely and depend on the Holy Spirit to know what is best in every situation. Hopefully, they will respond in the best possible way, and they will grow in their faith. These tests are a way of determining what they have learned, how they have applied what they have learned, and their confidence in what they have learned. The last area that will be tested is their ability to see beyond what has been taught. It is the goal of every teacher that students will learn to apply what they have learned to their own life and unique circumstances.

Unlike many tests that are designed to test the knowledge of a topic. Testing in this realm is about testing how the knowledge is being used and applied to life. This means you need to have a relationship with the person you are teaching so that your evaluation and testing relates to and grows out of their life and experience. This was central to how Jesus carried out the process of evaluation. He used what was happening, what they were thinking, and how they were

responding to define the process of evaluation. We will need to do the same thing. This means there is no such thing as a standardized test. Life is not standardized.

The goal is not simply to evaluate and test, but to do so as a doorway to their understanding and ability to apply what is being learned to life.

Chapter 7 Cared for Them

There is an aspect of discipleship that is critical for discipleship to become part of life and not just a classroom topic. It is the ability to care for those being discipled. Of course, as part of a structured program or course it has its limits.

One of the key limits is the willingness of the one being discipled to share their struggles with others. The bigger the group the harder this becomes. While there may be people who are willing to share what is happening in their life and their struggles, there are many barriers. Let me suggest a few.

Trust – can I trust these people with my personal struggle? The fear is that they will not keep what is shared in confidence. This is a legitimate concern. The bigger the group the more likely there will be someone who breaches that trust. When that happens then, for the person that has been betrayed, it will be harder and harder to commit to trust again. For the one who broke the trust it is nearly impossible to regain it.

Shame – to share a failure or struggle creates an issue of shame. I am ashamed of my lack of control, my failure to keep my word, to bring honor to those who are part of my life, and of my sin. Each person struggles with this. The flip side of this is that some share these things as if it is a badge of honor. I shared my shame with others, see how great I am and how strong I am. That is not a good thing.

Opinion – the opinion of others is a powerful force. More so the opinion of the leader of the group. We want to look good so they will have a good opinion of who we are. Sharing our struggles is a two-edged sword. It can improve the opinion of others towards us because we are taking steps of trust. At the same time, it can damage their opinion of us depending on what they think about the struggle we are involved in. Some struggles just create negative opinions for most people.

What is needed is a way to overcome the barriers so that the leader knows what is happening in a person's life. That knowledge allows them to provide the care needed to deal with whatever is happening.

Jesus lived with his disciples. That meant he spent significant time with them. You can't do that with a large group of people. We are aware that at times there were large numbers of people with Jesus. He took care of them as needed. Within this larger group Jesus selected 12 that he could give more time to and work closer with. Then he picked three of them for greater attention.

There are some interesting things to note in this process. Jesus did not pick a homogeneous group of people. They came from many walks of life, different social levels, and political views. Jesus spent enough time with those around him to know what they would need and how to care for them.

The next section of this chapter will look at the many ways Jesus cared for the disciples and a few other key people.

One of the clear passages that reveals how much Jesus cared for the twelve is found in John 14-17. Here we see Jesus talking about many ways that he had cared for them and would do so in the future. We hear his promise that they would receive peace. He promises to send the Holy Spirit to help them in proclaiming the gospel. We see this in several ways.

Future – the future is something we all worry about. Jesus took time to provide understanding in this area. He told them he was going to prepare a place for them so they would one day be with him (14:1-4).

Counselor – He promises to send the Holy Spirit to help them grow in their understanding and remind them of all they have learned (14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15).

Peace – He promises to provide for them a peace that the world does not have and cannot provide. (14:27).

In John 17 the prayer of Jesus contains a number of references that show how Jesus cared for them and provided for them.

Verse 6 – He revealed God to them.

Verses 11-12 – He protected them and asks God to continue to do so when he is gone.

Verses 20-21 – he prays for the current group and all those who will join them in the future. Specifically that they will be one with the Father as he was.

But all of this is only a small sample of how he cared for them throughout his ministry.

Undue influence – after the feeding of the 5000 the people want to make him king. He sends the disciples away so they will not be distracted by the desire of the crowd and able to keep their eyes on him and what they are learning

Fear – on the sea of Galilee he dealt with their fear during a storm. They were surprised that he could sleep. Once awake and seeing their fear he calmed the sea.

Protection – in the garden he seeks to protect them from the soldiers who have come to arrest him. As part of this when Peter foolishly cuts off the ear of a person, Jesus promptly heals it so there will be no outcry against Peter and the others.

Confusion – there are a number of times when Jesus notes their confusion about a parable or teaching he has shared. He willingly provides more information to help them.

Rich man entering into heaven – They react to his statement about how it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle than a rich person to enter heaven.

Parable of the sower – they ask him to explain this parable which he does.

Parable of weeds – they asked him to explain this which he did (Mt 13:36)

Parables – They asked him why he spoke in parables and he took the time to explain why (Mt 13:10; Mk 4:10-11, 33-34).

People

There are times when Jesus responds in specific ways to care for the needs of others. Here are some instances of people who were followers, on the fence in their belief, or uncertain but hopeful.

Mary and Martha – Jesus comes to them after the death of their brother and spends time with them dealing with their grief and helping them understand more about the resurrection and eternal life (Jn 11).

Nicodemus – Jesus spends time with this leader to help him understand what it means to be born of the spirit and how much God loves us (Jn 3).

Women with bleeding issue – she has the courage to risk touching Jesus but is terrified when Jesus calls her out. He soothes her fear and honors her faith (Mt 9; Mk 5; Lk 8).

Zaccheaus – This man was an outcast and yet Jesus cared for him. He provided the one thing Zaccheaus needed, acceptance as a person. This allowed Zaccheaus to make the decision to follow Jesus. The key here was that Jesus knew who he was, knew where to encounter him and knew what to do to care for him personally.

Peter – Peter needed to feel forgiven and restored after having denied the Lord the night before the crucifixion. Jesus does this at

the sea of Galilee when He queries Peter's love for him three times. It was a painful process for Peter but shows how much Jesus cared for those he had chosen.

His Mother – One of the most powerful pieces of evidence of Jesus care for those who believed in him was what he did from the cross. He provided for the care of his mother after his death and resurrection.

These are but a few samples of the fact that Jesus took time to know the people who were his followers and his willingness to respond to their needs. It also reveals that he spent enough time with these people to often anticipate what was happening in their lives and thoughts. This highlights the need of those discipling others to spend enough time with the ones they are discipling so that they become willing to share what is happening in their hearts and willing to receive further guidance and teaching.

This pattern is the foundation of the letters of the New Testament. While they contain a great deal of teaching, the foundation for that teaching is the goal of caring for the people who receive the letter. Here is a sample of some of them.

Ro 1:11 – I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong

1 Co 1 – Paul is concerned about the divisions in the church and counsels them

2 Co 1-2 – Paul discusses the purposes of his visit and letter. He wants them to grow but is concerned about the grief he may have caused.

Gal 1 – Paul's focus is on helping them return to the true gospel.

Ph 1:9-10 – Here is a portion of Paul's prayer for the church in Philippi. It is filled with concern for their care and ongoing growth.

2 Th 2:1 – Paul has heard about their confusion regarding Christ's return and writes to them to help them learn the truth.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus – Letters of Paul to young leaders. He is concerned that they develop the correct skills and attitudes for leading the church. As one reads these letters one can see that he knows them well and the content is adapted accordingly.

Jude – this short book was written to a group to help them deal with godless people who were affecting the church.

3 John – John writes this letter because a particular man is causing problems, and he is providing counsel on what to do.

I have not mentioned all of the letters. There are too many references to how the writers are picking their topics and material based on a clear knowledge of what is happening in the lives of the people in the church. Paul thinks of himself as the father to the church in Corinth and then as his spiritual children. He treats Timothy as if he were his son. That is what we should become to those we disciple, spiritual parents and siblings. If this happens, we will have greater freedom to care for those we are responsible for. This is because there is freedom on the part of both to share critical needs and so receive what is needed for further growth and development.

Chapter 8 Released

One of the challenges that faces everyone involved in discipleship is knowing when to let go. Actually, this is a common issue in this world. Parents wrestle with letting go of their children. They have raised them and cared for them all their lives, which makes it hard for them to imagine that their child is able to care for themselves without their guidance and help.

Many businesses deal with this as well and they handle it in different ways. A key way is through promotions. A person proves their ability to take on more responsibility and is given

the chance to work with less supervision or even be responsible for the supervision of others.

School systems have it as well. A key aspect of this is the degree system. The higher the degree you earn the greater freedom you have to define what you will do and teach. But it is also based on your readiness to continue to expand your own knowledge in your field of expertise.

There are other examples of this process of approving a person and then releasing them to work more independently. The word 'independently' is critical to the process. It stands in contrast to the word 'dependently.' While we may never be fully independent from others or the structures in which we function, there is a level at which we need to move from dependence to independence. This can occur in many contexts--work, recreational activity, relationships, and training, to mention a few.

So now let us look at what Jesus did in taking this step. For this we only need to turn to a number of passages that quickly reveal that Jesus indeed had this in mind as part of the process of discipleship. These are the well known passages of Mt 28:1-20; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8. In these texts Jesus describes clearly what he expects his disciples and others who have become his followers to do. He expects them to continue his work until the gospel has reached every tribe and nation, until they have gone to every part of the world.

What is even more important is that he takes several other key actions that further accent the fact that he is truly releasing them to do the work. He declares that he has the authority to send them by stating he has all authority in heaven and earth. This frees them to go anywhere with the knowledge that they are acting in the authority of the creator.

He further tells them that not only is he authorizing them but he also promises them access to the power they will need to accomplish the work given. We see this first in the promises about how once he is gone the counselor, the Holy Spirit will come. The Holy Spirit will provide them with critical knowledge and the ability to use it in declaring the gospel. He also tells them that the coming of the Holy Spirit will provide them with the power to carry out the tasks they are being given.

So, look at the steps.

1. Freedom to act
2. Authorization to act
3. Resources to act
4. Power to act

Finally, in all of this is a clear direction of what will be expected of them, and a clear idea of the what and the where of the work they are being given.

This concept repeats itself in the rest of the New Testament. Consider the following as examples.

1. **Deacons** – they were selected and then given the work to deal with the distribution of the gifts being received for the care of others.
2. **Stephen** – while there is no place where they tell Stephen he is to spend his time defending the truth, it is also clear that they did not inhibit his activity, which often is seen as tacit approval of what one is doing.
3. **Philip** – he travels to Samaria and starts a work. In this case Peter and John are sent to see what is happening. What happens is they pick up the work of Philip and expand on it. Again approval and the freedom to continue in this type of work. As a result we see Philip

- meeting with the eunuch and then heading off to another location to continue spreading the gospel.
4. **Antioch** – a group of people establish a church there and Barnabas is sent to evaluate what is happening. They must have believed greatly in him because there is no criticism of his action of going to find Saul to help with the work of the growing church.
 5. **Paul** – in Galatians we learn that he came to Jerusalem at one point to meet with a few of the key leaders to share with them what God was doing and to be sure that he was not in error. They approved him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. That became a turning point in the mission to the gentiles.
 6. **Timothy and Titus** – Paul releases them to carry out specific tasks. While he does give them guidelines to help them carry out their tasks, those guidelines are not an attempt to control them but free them to be more effective in the work.
 7. **Mark** – this is a unique one. Mark sought to be part of the mission work and failed. Barnabas wanted to continue working with Mark and did so, which brought him into conflict with Paul regarding whether Mark could be a useful member of the team. Much later Paul has changed his mind and lets us know that Mark is useful.

There are more, but these show us how important it is to release those we are discipling to carry out whatever task that God has chosen for them. If we have done our work of discipleship correctly then they will be able to do so. It is also an indication as to whether we are doing the task of discipleship correctly.

There is one other aspect of this process. When we carry out this step correctly it doesn't mean we no longer have a role in

their lives. The letters of the different writers make this quite clear.

Paul had no problem with providing further insight and guidance even after Timothy and Titus had assumed their responsibilities. Jude's letter to the group of people clearly shows that he felt it his right to help them deal with those who were trying to undermine the truth. Paul's letter to the church in Philippi highlights this as well. This was a very mature church and generous in many ways. Still Paul uses the events of his imprisonment, the gift they sent, and the sending of Epaphroditus to take them deeper into a number of topics related to serving God.

Releasing people does not mean abandoning them. It means trusting them. At the same time when done correctly those we release will be willing to share how things are going and are willing to receive more teaching as needed. We can never cover every contingency in the process of discipling. Again, this is evident by the content of the letters.

It is no longer about providing a controlled environment for learning and growth but about developing mutual confidence in each other that allows for further input and growth.