

# DOING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY - 1

Luke 14:25-35

In the past many churches have done well in their soul-winning, but have not followed up and disciplined those whom they have won to Christ. Discipleship is a very hard work to do well because of the time-(years) and involvement-(commitment) of the church and those who are disciplers.

In the earlier years of independents' and fundamentalism there was a great push for winning the lost, and they did so with passion. But those that were won to Christ for the most part were not disciplined and grounded in their faith as they should have been. This accounts for many immature church members which have so many problems from being untrained in Christ-like love and forgiveness, which leads to disunity.

Few churches have a discipleship program that is a vital part of their service to their members and has been well planned and thought out. But for most churches and pastors this is not the case. They do want to help their people to grow and be disciplined, but lack the training or resources to do so. There are a lot of resources for churches, but each church will need to find the one that fits their ministry and meets their people's needs as much as possible. Then the work of discipleship begins and should move the new or older Christian along in their maturing as a true disciple of Christ.

Here is what the (Complete Book of Everyday Christianity) says about churches attitudes concerning discipleship. "They often equate discipleship with words such as *discipline, obedience, constraint, self-denial, hardship, sacrifice* and *martyrdom*—all words that have negative connotations in a culture given over to self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment. Each of us needs to probe what the word *discipleship* feels like to us. Is the idea of discipleship a burden or a joy to us? What images do we have of disciples? Are these positive or negative?" Discipleship is a lifelong personal relationship with Jesus Christ, in which we grow more into His likeness each day. That's positive!

Doing a discipleship ministry is a great and rewarding work of the church that really takes it seriously. It will have a powerful impact on those who are disciplined and also those who are learning to be a discipler. Discipleship is for the long haul in terms of doing ministry down the road for a church. If members are not disciplined and growing in their Christian lives, then neither will the church grow as a whole.

We will try to look at doing a discipleship ministry in the church, with some thoughts on the how to implement them into a workable plan for any church. May the Lord bless you and your church family this week.

Bro. Mickey  
SCM

## DOING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY - 2

Luke 14:25-35

Discipleship is not a onetime event but a lifelong following of Jesus Christ in a personal relationship that changes the disciple into His likeness. Therefore we all are growing and maturing in the discipleship process. As pastors the idea is that they have completed their schooling and the education has earned them their maturity in Christ. Going to a college and getting an education doesn't atomically make someone a mature Christian or leader for a church. It can help in many ways to prepare them for the ministry ahead, but real maturity comes from following closely to Jesus in an intimate relationship.

Doing a discipleship ministry really starts with the leadership in the church, which sees the need for others to grow and mature in their Christian life. Of course this means that leadership will take the lead by making sure they are growing and maturing themselves. This means that they have been and are being disciplined in Christ through reading, studying, following, and being accountable to other mature examples in their lives. When one has stopped being a disciple, they can't be a discipler of others; this means that it is a lifelong process.

Someone has said the church will never rise above its leadership. This could be the cause of many stagnant and declining churches in America. Doing a discipleship ministry means that one is willing to be disciplined themselves. In other words we will need to look again into what is discipleship and how it can be worked into the ministry of your church, starting at the leadership. Here are a few questions that a leader may ask themselves in relation to their own personal growth as a disciple.

- Do I have a teachable spirit? A disciple is a learner, one who is willing to learn from others. (Closed minds lead to closed churches)
- Am I growing personally with the Lord? Having a faithful quite time with the Lord each day. (Not being legalistic in our devotional time, but at liberty to grow and change as He leads) (Studying for sermons and lessons is not personal time).
- Is there any change in my life and heart in the way I relate to others inside and outside the church? (Growing as a disciple of Christ means taking on His attitudes and actions when dealing with people).
- How close would others be to Christ if they were doing the same thing that I do each day? (Discipleship is being an example to others of Christ working in and through us as a disciple).
- Are there areas that I really need to grow and mature in myself? (All of us have areas of growth that we could be more mature in as a leader).
- If I don't or am unwilling to learn and grow in my own personal discipleship with Christ, what will be the outcome for the church in the next few years? (Sometimes we think that all is well if we just stay the same, but that's just not reality).

May the Lord help us as leaders to grow in grace and knowledge of Him for His glory and to be a blessing and example to His church.

Bro. Mickey - SCM

## DOING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY- 3

Luke 14:25-35

There are many good resources to be used in the church for doing a discipleship ministry. There is everything from short booklets to sometimes overwhelming volumes with complex studies. My personal opinion is that the Bible is the main source for discipling believers with the use of good simple materials that are applicable to all stages of spiritual growth. Many churches have used the basics to the Christians life to get new converts started in the right direction, then after some time have stop offering even this to new believers.

The thinking is that everyone will be disciple through the teaching and preaching ministry of the church. Through surely there is a certain amount of discipling in these ministries of the church, there is a great need for a plan for development and ongoing discipleship for different maturity levels within the church family. If we look at the church as a family then we can see that there are different stages of development at which there is a need to learn, grow and to develop in before moving on to the next stage of maturity.

Just as we need the basics for new believers in Christ we also need more of the solid foods for those that are growing which will then lead to a more intense diet of the Word of God. In many churches that we have helped there has been a study diet of only one or two subjects of which the leader thought was of importance. Babies get chocked on strong meat and adults do not want a liquid diet or mashed up vegetables all the time. In doing a discipleship ministry consider these suggestions;

- Decide that a discipleship ministry is worth the time and energy to help the church members grow in the Christian life.
- Seek the Lord and ask for input from godly counsel of mature members of the church or other trusted leaders about what resources and materials would be good to start with for your church.
- Understand that there are different ways that people are disciplined in the ministries of the church, through the teaching (SS), preaching (collectively), groups (small or large) and personal (one on one). Discipleship can support and enrich the teaching and preaching ministries if done correctly.
- Be intentional about discipling different age groups and maturity levels. Have a class for new believers and then one for those that want to move forward in their understanding of their Christian life.
- Look at the church as a family whose needs are varied according to their maturity level (know where the churches needs and overall maturity is before starting any discipleship class).
- Sometimes there may be a need for discipling in certain areas of which the church is having difficulties, (home life, marriage, children, and finance).
- Don't start a new Bible study class thinking that is discipleship. There is a time and place for that kind of study. Discipleship is intended to help believers to grow in their relationship in Christ with a challenge to follow Him more closely.

May our Lord bless and grow you this week in a closer walk with Him.

Bro. Mickey - SCM

## DOING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY - 4

Luke 14:25-35

Discipleship means duplication – if there is no or little discipling then there will be little or no duplication of believers. We cannot impart unto others what we don't have ourselves. In following the Lord as His disciples there should be a duplication of ourselves unto others. If we are not growing in the Lord and following Him more in our personal lives then there will be a lack of discipleship of others. Churches that grow have a plan for discipleship.

In his book (Kingdom Principles for Church Growth) Gene Mims gives some good insight to discipleship, he writes; "The spiritual maturity of believers is a goal and mark of a growing church. The growth of God's kingdom is measured not only by numerical growth, it is also measured by believer's spiritual transformation in at least four dimensions." Here are his four dimensions with my input on each one;

### **1. Developing in our relationship with Christ.**

Everyone can improve in their relationship with the Lord, this means more than knowing about Him, it's also growing to be like Him. This only comes from "our fellowship and intimacy with the Lord" which is an essential for transformation.

### **2. Developing in our relationship with Believers.**

Healthy churches will have members that are growing in their relationship with each other in the Lord. This means that love will be predominate over selfishness, strife, seeing others faults, for love covers a multitude of sin. A Christ-like discipleship will build a close fellowship of believers that sustains them through the difficult and hard times.

### **3. Developing relationships with the unsaved.**

Those who are disciples of Jesus are following His desire to see the lost come to know Him as their personal savior. Why are there so little salvations in most churches, maybe it's caused by so little discipling of a correct way of winning the lost to Christ. "We never can separate discipleship from evangelism in our lives and churches. Spiritual transformation in a church results in believers learning their responsibility to witness to the lost"- (Mims).

### **4. Developing Christian discipline.**

There are so many things churches are doing today, but they are not discipling their members in good practices of spiritual growth. Reading the Bible, prayer, worship, witnessing and faithful attendance are good and beneficial if they are molded by and taught by mature believers in the church. Just knowing these things will not help a believer to grow in their relationship with the Christ, it's in practicing them in our daily walk with the Lord, (James 1:22). May we not just teach them these important disciplines, but practices them ourselves and help others to do likewise.

Growing churches have members that are growing in their love for Christ, other believers, the lost and in their own personal discipleship following Jesus. May the Lord help us to develop in each of these areas so that we can help others to grow also. God bless and have a wonderful week following Christ and helping others to do the same.

Bro. Mickey -SCM

## DOING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY - 5

Luke 14:25-35

Someone has said that salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life. It is important that believers understand that being a disciple is a lifelong journey and that there are many trials and temptations along the way. Discipleship is really losing our lives in Jesus and following Him no matter where He leads. Then we will indeed find fulfillment and satisfaction in the Lord and enjoy serving Him and others. Jesus said in (Matthew 16:25) "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

It is only as we develop others around us that we permanently succeed. His disciples would need to make their own disciples. Biblical discipleship is a necessary outgrowth of (and not a replacement for) biblical evangelism. "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (2 Timothy 2:2).

New and stunted believers are to be taught and nurtured along in their faith by a more mature Christian. If we neglect our responsibility to the next generation, we will continue to reproduce carnal, struggling Christians in our churches. As mature Christians, we have an obligation to teach to others what we have learned. Here are a few suggestions for starting a discipleship ministry in the church.

### **1. Choose a discipleship leader.**

It may be beneficial to have the pastor or some other very mature believer in the church to start and head up the discipleship ministry. In smaller churches this will be the pastor and he will have to plan ahead for a time and place of discipling others. After some time of discipling then the pastor should have others who can do the discipleship ministry and help train others.

### **2. Choose your study for discipleship.**

There are many good discipleship curriculums but be prayerful and consider the needs of those who are you are discipling. This will depend on if you are doing a class or one on one discipling. In a class of most all new believers you will need to cover the basics of the Christian life. In more advance classes they may need to know how to relate to others and understand forgiveness and what the church stands for and how it operates. Please don't make this another S.S. class or a book study from the O.T. or N.T., this should be a how to follow the Lord training.

### **3. Launch this new ministry into your church through;**

Announcements, bulletin inserts, and a time set aside in a Sunday night service to explain and excite the members. Have a time and place already to start and encourage anyone that wants to grow in their walk with the Lord to attend.

May the Lord bless your new or revived discipleship ministry and so strengthen the church to serve the Lord and others better. God bless and have a great week!

Bro. Mickey - SCM