

A SERIES ON WHAT JESUS BELIEVED AND TAUGHT — AND LIVED

eighth lesson

Discipleship and Disciplines for the Spiritual Life

Pursuant upon our last lesson, let us understand, then, that being a disciple of Jesus is a perfectly definite state of being which one is either in or not in. You can fail to be a disciple of Jesus. Many people are not in a state of discipleship to Him. Some know it. Some are confused about it. Some think they are though they are not, because they have been led to suppose that simply being a “Christian” by some definition automatically involves being a disciple of Jesus. We have, however, noted that the dominant tendency in our times, with regard to discipleship, is to try to lead Christians to enter “discipling” activities, all the while assuming that they might very well remain Christians though they decide not to become students of Jesus, abiding with Him to learn how to be and do as He did.

Realization of the New Testament ideals of abundant life and love and power are the results of sustained discipleship to Jesus, and of that alone. Many dear and devoted Christians doggedly carry on with their lives in spite of the fact that their spiritual aspirations and hopes for life in Christ don’t work out very well. They have not found a plan for spiritual growth into the peace and power of Jesus for their own lives, and the religious activities which they engage in are not adequate to the end hoped for.

- I. The secret of the easy yoke. (Matt 11:28-30) In two parts: (1) “Take my yoke.” That is, get into the harness with Him. Be his person everywhere and He will be with you in the same harness. Stop trying to save your life and do “your own thing”: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt 16:25) LIVE TO DO THE WILL AND WORK OF JESUS! (2) “Learn of me.” Watch the way Jesus lived in the Gospels, do the same things and He will meet you in them now, for that is where He is. What did He do on his days off or during breaks? What He did while “off the spot” is the key to his power when “on the spot.” ADOPT HIS OVERALL STYLE OF LIFE.
- II. Disciplines: Activities we can engage in by direct effort that enable us to do things we CANNOT accomplish by direct effort. The “disciplined person” is the one who is able to do Very often, people say, “Oh, I was a student of Arthur Rubenstein or something like that. Now, any individual who will even give a part of what a person would give up to be a student of a great master in some art—if they would just think in those same terms. at the time and in the way it needs to be done.
- III. Spiritual disciplines, or disciplines for the spiritual life, are disciplines in the general sense just stated, but they are specifically designed to enable us to interact with the spirit of God and receive his grace “to help in the time of need.” E.g. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not

into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matt 26:41, cf. Rom 6:11-14, Gal 6:7-8, Eph 5:15-16 & Eph 6:11-18, Col 3:1-17)

- IV. What were some of Jesus’ “off the spot” activities? Study (Luke 2:46-49, John 7:15), submission (Luke 2:51-52, Matt 3:15, Heb 5:8), solitude (Matt 4:1-2 & Matt 14:23, Mark 1:35 & Mark 6:31-32) fasting (Matt 4:2-4 <Mark 6:16- 18>, John 4:31-34), secrecy (John 7:1-12 <Matt 6:1-18>, Luke 4:42, Luke 5:16 & Luke 9:21). IN THESE ACTIVITIES HE DWELT IN THE RICHNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FROM WHICH HE DREW TO LIVE AND MINISTER ON THE SPOT. (John 5:30, John 8:16 & John 8:29, John 10:30).
- V. These and other activities such as silence and prayer and service and worship and confession and celebration— some more or only suited to our condition and not His—are activities which we can choose and in which we learn to draw from Him and His Kingdom; the truth, love and power we need to be the light and salt in our place. He will personalize the disciplines to us as we seek Him in them, for He will be our teacher. We will learn to know His voice.
- VI. The disciplinary activities:
 - A. Are not for merit but for access and reception of grace.
 - B. Are of no use if they are not needed (Like medicine or training in other respects).
 - C. Are our part in “working out our own salvation with fear and trembling because God is working in us.” (Phil 2:12-13)
 - D. Constitute ways, and can become a coherent plan, for placing our time and our bodies at God’s disposal, “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16) and making our bodies “living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1-2)
 - E. Are for disciples only, for those who have found the pearl of great price, life in the kingdom of heaven, and really want to possess this gift of God.
 - F. Require the ministry of a discipline fellowship with ministers equipped to bring the kingdom to bear upon real life.

“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)