

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Discipleship - introducing a person to the Savior, building them to maturity, and training them to reproduce and be effective witnesses for Christ.

Disciple - is a "learner" who is committed to the process of growing by adjusting his or her life style in order to obey and follow Jesus. Disciples love others as Jesus loves. They abide in Him to build and train others into mature, reproducing disciples.

Discipler - is a person who is trained in the process of disciple making and is actively involved in training and teaching a discipleship group.

Discipleship Group - is a technical term used to designate the group for training potential disciple makers.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Why are Christians not as committed as they should be to Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to be "Called" by Jesus Christ?

What are some factors that may contribute to giving a half-hearted commitment to Christ?

THE DIVINE MANDATE

"Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples) or (Christians) all nations" (Matt. 28:19) is the Mandate of the Master.

If this commission or mandate of our Lord is to be carried out, the principle of discipleship training commended by Paul will have to become a reality in the church: "The Apostle Paul admonishing his stellar preacher Timothy said, "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" (Tim. 2:2).

To entrust the gospel to the faithful of this generation, we must act on the reformation message that all believers are "called" to be ministers (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:10).

The old Testament ministry of the high priest was to represent the interest and the needs of the people to God. The letter to the Hebrews extensively describes Jesus as the perfect and eternal High Priest. Christ is the intercessor for the saints at the right hand of God. Through the work of Christ, the believer now has the access to the throne of God and every Christian presently enjoys this authority and privilege. The corporate community of believers is known as a Kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 5:10).

Let's take a look at the word "called" as it relates to ministry. The Greek root is Kletos, and lexicons define it as "called" or "vocation" Paul wrote, "... think of what you were when you were called" (Cor. 1:26), and, "... live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1).

Paul makes no mention of professional elite. The context clearly refers to all members of the body of Christ. The division between the clergy and the laity came about in the medieval church. The clergy in its push for power placed itself on a pedestal and did all church work while the members became complacent spectators in the pews.

Paul describing the people gifts of the church said, "and He [God] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

In the King James Version a comma is placed after saints who are not found in the original Greek text. Because of this misplaced comma varied consequences has arisen in the theology of clergy and layperson. If the comma remains the text can be interpreted that the people gifts are only for the equipping of the saints. However, without the comma the text can properly be interpreted for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry." In other words, the role of the pastor would be to

equip the saints for ministry. This text is not describing the pastor as a performer of ministry, but instead a trainer of ministers. Note the translation of this text:

- To fit the people for the work of ministry. - Twentieth Century New Testament.
- In order fully to equip His people for the work of serving. - Weymouth.
- To equip God's people for work in His service. - New English Bible.
- In order to get His holy people ready to serve as workers. - Beck.
- His gifts were made that Christian might be equipped for their service. - Phillips.

The clergy then is not to be performers of ministry but to teach and to train members for the work of ministry. In other words, the ministry responsibility has not been given to a group less than one percent of the body, namely clergy; it is the right and call to 100 percent of church membership, namely saints.

THE CHURCHES CONDITION

The present condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is appalling in light of its mission (Matt. 28:19-20). If the purpose of the Church is to glorify God by making disciples of all nations, kindred, tongues, and people then we are failing. There are basically two reasons among others for this downward spiral in our churches. They are as follows:

The Forgotten Message of the First Angel!

"THE ETERNAL GOSPEL"

In our day most people are crying out for the assurance found in the very first elements of the eternal good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. That saving relationship without which all doctrine is irrelevant is what we have failed to present because we took for granted the message of the first angel of Revelation 14. He had "the everlasting gospel to present to those who dwell on the earth". We have taken the simple assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ so much for granted for so long that a great many of those who profess the three angel's message do not know whether they themselves possess it or not, much less know how to testify to it in an enthusiastic way to those who are lost.

Congregations who have come to realize the outcry of the masses for this fundamental hope of eternal life, and who have learned to share this elementary witness with the lost are growing by leaps and bounds. They are finding thousands grateful to learn of a Savior and eager to know and do His will whatever they discover that to be.

The Spirit of Prophecy pointed to the effective labor of others from we might learn better methods: "I have been shown that in our labor for enlightening the people in the large cities the work has not been well organized or the method of labor as efficient as in other churches that have not the great light we regard as so essential." *Medical Ministry*, p. 301 In *Review and Herald*, Feb. 22, 1887, she said: "There are many who want to know what they must do to be saved. They want a plain and clear explanation of steps requisite in conversion... to especially make plain the way that sinners may come to Christ and be saved. They should point them to Christ, as did John, and with touching simplicity, their hearts aglow with the love of Christ, say, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"

INACTIVITY OF MEMBERS IN EVANGELISM

In today's church, it has been estimated that it takes one hundred adults and one year are required to introduce 1.7 people to Christ. The alarming fact is that 50 percent of Adventist churches do less than that. Statistics also shows that out of the 300,000,000 million in people North America approximately 1,000,000 are Adventist and 400,020 are not active members.

Out of 300,000,000 million people in North America one in 300 is an Adventist. 80 out of 300 are church goers and 220 out of 300 have no particular church affiliation. The question that we must ask ourselves in light of the great commission is this, Why are we going after the 80 (church goers) when there are 220 who have no church affiliation?

Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a strategy to reach the unchurched? "The Each One Reach One Guide for Equipping Dynamic Disciple Makers" provides a strategy that can reach church goers as well as the unchurched for Jesus Christ. This strategy can create a vision for reaching the unchurched and give a sense of destiny which will appropriate the power for witnessing promised by Jesus before His ascension (Acts 1:8).

Once a commitment to disciple making is established in the church and the enormous potential of apprenticeship is understood, there can be no room for pessimism. As pastors and laypeople personally experience an equipping lifestyle, they develop an almost infectious commitment to training faithful men and women. When this occurs, the church becomes revitalized, energized and ready for service.

The equipping concepts and spiritual disciplines described in this study guide have been applied repeatedly in many countries. Jesus, Paul, Peter and an unnamed host or the early church leaders practiced disciple making before the days of church buildings, printing presses, or mass media. Using the simplest possible tools but the most profound strategy, they turned their generation right-side up in the cause of Christ.

The challenge of the future is simply to apply the timeless divine strategy of the past. Nothing less than total victory should be expected in world evangelization and church growth because we have the promise from the mouth of Jesus Himself: "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14).

CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP

A fundamental mark of a disciple of Jesus is that they are called by Him to discipleship. This call is personal and is demonstrated by making a total commitment to Him in word and deed. Socrates had disciples, John the Baptist had disciples, and Gandhi had disciples. But to be a disciple of Jesus Christ involves much more than following any human leader. It is important to realize that total commitment to Christ always begin with a call.

The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to His life and carry on His work after He returned to His father. John and Andrew were the first to be invited (Jn. 1:35-40). Andrew in turn brought his brother Peter (Jn. 1:41, 42). The next day Jesus found Philip on his way to Galilee, and, Philip found Nathaniel (Jn. 1:43-51). James the brother of John is called several months later and shortly after Matthew is called as Jesus passes through Capernaum (Mk. 2:13, 14; Matt. 9:9). The particulars surrounding the call of the other disciples are not recorded in the gospels, but it is believed that they all occurred in the first year of the Lord's ministry.

JESUS' METHOD OF ENLISTING DISCIPLES

Jesus did not demand to be followed; He simply extended invitations. He intentionally called His disciples one by one and they in turn lead their family and friends into a relationship with Jesus. Therefore, being called by Christ is inherently tied to introducing others to the savior. It makes a tremendous difference when Christians realize that it was Jesus who called them. It was Jesus who chose them, they did not chose Him (In. 15:16). Too many professed Christian lose sight of this very important fact.

Today many Christian churches suffer because its members feel that they have "made a decision for Christ", or that they have joined a certain church. Such man centered notions spell spiritual weakness and unbalance. It is only when we see ourselves as called, chosen, and commissioned by Christ that

we will want to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. The call, "follow me" (Matt. 4:19; Mk. 1:27), necessitates the one called not only to leave all for Jesus but also to reach others for Him.

Reaching the unchurched requires us not to be enslaved to the following presuppositions

RELIGION IS A PRIVATE MATTER

Within our culture there are many who have bought into the idea that religion is a private matter and it is rude and intrusive to push it on others. It is veritable that salvation is an individual choice but the "message of salvation" in order to reach a fragmented, disillusioned, and dying world needs messengers (disciplers) who will deliver the Gospel to non-Christians. This is why Jesus in His Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount selects the word "salt" to portray the character and mission of His followers (Matt. 5:13). There are several ways in which "salted disciples" can penetrate the lives of non-Christians. Salt has a variety of characteristics and functions in society. What then are the uses of salted disciples as they assimilate into the lives of non-Christians?

1. **Salt causes thirst.** As salt makes people thirsty for water, so should we cause people to be thirsty for the Water of Life. But we must remember we are not the Water-only Christ is. We are simply the salt, the catalyst that entices others to go to the only Source that can satisfy their insatiable thirst. Ellen White rightly remarks that "no human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. . . . we need not seek to quench our thirst at shallow streams; for the fountain is just above us, of whose abundant waters we may freely drink."
2. **Salt brings out the flavor of food.** To bring out the flavor in people's lives means to relate to them as Jesus did, that is to focus on and reinforce what is positive in them. Ellen White states, In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. . . . Looking upon them with hope. He inspired hope. . . . In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard.
3. **Salt melts ice.** Christ is certainly a warm and effusive person and cannot reside in our lives without expressing His warmth and love through us. His love in us is an internal fire that warms the heart of those who have been frostbitten by a cruel world.
4. **Salt brings healing.** The church ought to be a refuge where wounded people find healing and restoration in Christ. God has given us the same ministry He has given to His Son—the ministry of reconciliation in a broken world (2 Cor. 5: 18-2). As Christians work for the restoration of souls, missing members would become a priority in ministry. Introducing a person to the Savior does not happen by proxy. It is done by "salted disciples" who remain in His word and continually give to others. By committing ourselves in service to others is Christ's great love made tangible. The love of Christ, "cherished in the heart. . . . sweetens the entire life and sheds its blessing upon all around. It is this, and this only, that can make us the salt of the earth.

IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

Many Christians believe that separation from the world means not associating in any meaningful way with unbelievers. Unfortunately, this results in no meaningful contacts with clubs, social networks, or neighborhoods. Statistics show that the average Christian has no non-Christian friends, therefore, sharing one's faith is done without prior social contacts.

In Jesus' intercessory prayer for His disciples He asked His Father not to take them out of the world but to keep them from evil (John 17:15). Jesus desired not to isolate His disciples from the world (non-Christians), but to insulate them by the word for ministry (John 17:17).

By His own example the Savior has shown that His followers can be in the world and yet not be of the world. "He came not to partake of its delusive pleasures, to be swayed by its customs, and to follow its practices, but to do His Father's will, and to seek and save the lost. With this object before him, the Christian may stand uncontaminated in any surroundings." AA, p. 467

JESUS' DEFINITION OF A DISCIPLE

The simplest meaning of a disciple is that he/she is a "learner" 'pupil', "apprentice" or "follower". In the New Testament the English translation of the word "disciple" most often comes from the Greek word mathetes. This word occurs 250 times in the New Testament, but it can be found only in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.⁷

The word mathetes denotes the existence of a personal attachment to Jesus as their master. Mathetes is a Greek masculine noun, which comes from the Greek verb manthano, meaning to learn.

Mathetria is the Greek feminine noun, which is translated "disciples" in the New

Testament to refer to Tabitha of Joppa in Acts 9:26. "Being a disciple of Christ in the New Testament sense is gender inclusive."

We can summarize Jesus, teaching on disciples as follows. A disciple:

- Is willing to deny self, take up a cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23-25).
- Put Christ before self, family, and possession (Luke 14:25-35).
- Is committed to Christ teachings (John 8:31).
- Is committed to world evangelism (Matthew 9:36-38).
- Love others as Christ loves (John 13:34-35).
- Abide in Christ, is obedient, bears fruit, glorifies God, has joy and loves the brethren (John 15:7-17)

Therefore, a disciple is someone who has attached him/herself to Christ and is learning to do something, or to be something with the His help as their teacher (or we may say learning from the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ).