

Discipleship is a must

For more than 200 years obeying Jesus has been replaced by getting people saved. No more is required. This has not only denied Jesus, but it has weakened the church so it is now impotent, and without power.

It also means that people are not only spiritually immature but also live a private faith that denies the truth that every believer is dependent on every other believer, because we are all part of the one body of Christ on earth, and all equipped by the Spirit for service to one another.

The Spirit of Christ has been given to each one in Christ, so that we are all bound together with His power and love with Him, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so that we can do greater works of making disciples by revealing the love of Christ as a testimony of the glory of God.

Without the Spirit of Christ leading, we are independent from God

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Romans 8:6-15

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, for if you are living according to the flesh, you

must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

The flesh is dead to the Spirit of God

Our natural tendency is not to comply with the Spirit. We naturally live according to the flesh. For the mind to be set on the Spirit we must have a greater love for Christ than pleasing ourselves. Spiritual mindfulness requires discipline, diligence, determination and the heart of discipleship.

- The flesh seeks the pleasure of self-centeredness. The flesh desires to please itself.
- The flesh longs to have the things of the creation and cannot comprehend the Creator.
- The flesh is addicted to a life of ease and idleness.
- The flesh is concerned with self-protection and is averse to any idea of self-sacrifice.
- The flesh thinks love is something to be grasped instead of being given.
- The flesh has a mind interested in independence of heart, so that it demands a privacy that resists open transparency before others and God, and His kind of inclusiveness with interdependence on one another.
- The flesh is afraid of losing its control and will contrive any means to preserve itself.

Therefore, Jesus said: Luke 9:23-24

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Insight from Dallas Willard. 'The great omission'

Though costly, discipleship once had a very clear, straightforward meaning.

In the heart of a disciple there is a desire, and there is a decision or settled intent. Having come to some understanding of what it means, and thus having "counted up the costs," the disciple of Christ desires above all else to be like Him. Thus, "it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher" (Matthew 10:25). And moreover, "everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher" (Luke 6:40).

Given this desire, usually produced by the lives and words of those already in the Way, there is still a decision to be made: the decision to devote oneself to becoming like Christ. The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christ-like and so dwelling in his "faith and practice," systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end. By these decisions and actions, even today, one enrolls in Christ's training, becomes His pupil or disciple. There is no other way. We must keep this in mind should we, as disciples, decide to make disciples.

It was right and good of Bonhoeffer to point out that one cannot be a disciple of Christ without forfeiting things normally sought in human life, and that one who pays little in the world's coinage to bear His name has reason to wonder where he or she stands with God.

But the cost of nondiscipleship is far greater—even when this life alone is considered, than the price paid to walk with Jesus, constantly learning from Him. Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated through-out by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, nondiscipleship costs you exactly that abundance of life Jesus said He came to bring (John 10:10). The cross-shaped yoke of Christ is after all an instrument of liberation and power

to those who live in it with Him and learn the meekness and lowliness of heart that brings rest to the soul.

For those who lead or minister, there are yet graver questions: What authority or basis do I have to baptise people who have not been brought to a clear decision to be a disciple of Christ? Dare I tell people, as "believers" without discipleship, that they are at peace with God and God with them? Where can I find justification for such a message? Perhaps most important: Do I as a minister have the faith to undertake the work of disciple-making? Is my first aim to make disciples? Or do I just run an operation?

Nothing less than life in the steps of Christ is adequate to the human soul or the needs of our world. Any other offer fails to do justice to the drama of human redemption, deprives the hearer of life's greatest opportunity, and abandons this present life to the evil powers of the age. The correct perspective is to see following Christ not only as the necessity it is, but as the fulfillment of the highest human possibilities and as life on the highest plane.

Again: Dallas Willard. 'The great omission'

Now, those who honestly find themselves concerned about such matters might find it helpful to consider four simple points:

First, there is absolutely nothing in what Jesus Himself or His early followers taught that suggests you can decide just to enjoy forgiveness at Jesus's expense and have nothing more to do with Him.

This "heresy" has created the impression that it is quite reasonable to be a "vampire Christian." One in effect says to Jesus, "I'd like a little of your blood, please. But I don't care to be your student or have your character. In fact, won't you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I'll see you in heaven." But can we really imagine that this is an approach that Jesus finds acceptable?

Second, if we do not become His apprentices in Kingdom living, we remain locked in defeat so far as our moral intentions are concerned. This is where most professing Christians find themselves today. Statistical studies prove it. People, generally, choose to sin. And they are filled with explanations as to why, everything considered, it is "necessary" to do so.

But, even so, no one wants to be a sinner. It is amusing that people will admit to lying, for example, but stoutly deny that they are liars.

In contrast, practicing Jesus's words, as his apprentices, enables us to understand our lives and to see how we can interact with God's redemptive resources, ever at hand. This in turn gives us an increasing freedom from failed intentions as we learn from him how to, simply, do what we know to be right. By a practiced abiding in his words, we come to know the truth, and the truth does, sure enough, make us free (John 8:36). We are able to do the good we intend.

Third, only avid discipleship to Christ through the Spirit brings the inward transformation of thought, feeling, and character that "cleans the inside of the cup" (Matthew 23:25) and "makes the tree good" (Matthew 12:33). As we study with Jesus we increasingly become on the inside, with the "Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:6)—exactly what we are on the outside, where actions and moods and attitudes visibly play over our body, alive in its social context. An amazing simplicity will take over our lives, a simplicity that is really just transparency.

This requires a long and careful learning from Jesus to remove the duplicity that has become second nature to us.

Finally, for the one who makes sure to walk as close to Jesus as possible there comes the reliable exercise of a power that is beyond them in dealing with the problems and evils that afflict earthly existence. Jesus is actually looking for people He can trust with His power. He knows that otherwise we remain largely helpless in the face of the organised and disorganised evils around us, and that we are unable, given His chosen strategy, to promote His will for good in this world with adequate power.

However we may understand the details, there can be no doubt, on the biblical picture of human life, that we were meant to be inhabited by God and to live by a power beyond ourselves. Human problems cannot be solved by human means. Human life can never flourish unless it pulses with the "immeasurable greatness of His power for us who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). But only constant students of Jesus will be given adequate power to fulfill their calling to be God's person for their time and their place in this world. They are the only ones who develop the character which makes it safe to have such power.

For the solution look at God's word

Romans 8:13

for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Philippians 2:12-13

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Ephesians 4:17-25

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Dallas Willard

What Jesus expects us to do is not complicated or obscure. In some cases, it will require that we change what we have been doing. But the Great Commission, His plan for spiritual formation, "church growth," and world service is pretty obvious. Let's just do it. He will provide all the teaching and support we need. Remember, "when all else fails, follow the instructions."

Abide in Christ