

## THE MATTER OF DISCIPLESHIP

### I. THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- A. The word disciple means "**learner**" and as it is applied to believers it identifies those who receive the Lord's instructions, apply these things in their own lives, and then are able to pass on these teachings to others also (Mk. 1:16,17; Matt. 11:28,29).
- B. The call of discipleship is to become like one's teacher and in the case of the Christian it is a spiritual discipline which comprises one's entire life (Matt. 10:24,25).
- C. The call of discipleship is extended to every believer and it is a necessary discipline in order to be involved and used in the Lord's service (II Pet. 3:18; Mk. 1:17,18).

### II. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP AND WHAT IT DEMANDS OF A CHRISTIAN

- A. Discipleship calls upon us as believers to forsake everything for Christ (Lk.14:25-35).
  - 1. This calls upon us to put Christ above all our possessions (Lk.12:34; 14:33; Col. 3:2). This means we are to value Him above everything else in this world. What we possess should be looked upon as something He has entrusted us with and it should be disposed of as He leads and directs in a manner which will glorify Him (Lk 14:33).
  - 2. This calls upon us to put Christ before all other persons (Lk 14:26; Matt. 10:37). The Lord Jesus used the word *hate* (Lk. 14:26) as a figure of speech to show a comparison of how our love for Him should eclipse all others. This means when the demands of any others run contrary to what Christ says or is in conflict with what He wants us to do we should give Him pre-eminence and do His will (Lk. 1:38; Jn. 2:7; Acts 5:29).
  - 3. This calls upon us to put Christ above ourselves and our own aspirations (Lk. 14:26). This means we should be willing to give

up whatever things the Lord would require of us and this includes also our own lives if it should be according to His will.

- B. Discipleship calls upon us as believers to take up a personal cross for Christ (Lk. 9:23,24).
  - 1. This cross has been misunderstood by some to mean the bearing of some kind of burden such as a disease or putting up with different people or circumstances.
  - 2. The cross we're called upon to bear as disciples of the Lord Jesus is one of dying daily to our own sinful desires and the sinful things in our lives in order to serve the Lord (Lk.14:27; Rom. 6:11-13; I Cor. 15:31).
- C. Discipleship calls upon us as believers to follow after Christ (Lk.14:27).
  - 1. This involves obedience to His will (Lk. 6:46; Acts 9:6; Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9).
  - 2. This involves staying in fellowship with Him (Jn. 15:4,5; I Jn. 1:7; 3:6).
  - 3. This involves having a desire to please Him in everything we do and judging everything in the light of bringing glory and honor to Him (I Cor. 6:19,20; 10:31).

### III. THE CATEGORIES OF DISCIPLESHIP AND WHAT THEY EVIDENCE IN A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

- A. Some disciples of the Lord may be classified as **nominal** disciples or those in *name* only. The majority of those who followed the Lord Jesus were of this kind. They were caught up in the excitement and curiosity of His miraculous works and they followed Him because of the loaves or to receive some kind of temporal benefits (Jn. 6:25-27). Nominal disciples may go a ways and seem to be genuine but when the excitement wanes and they are called upon to pay the cost of real discipleship they will turn back and wilt, away like the seed upon stoney ground (Matt. 13:5,6; 20,21; Jn. 6:60-66).
- B. Some disciples of the Lord may be classified as **false** disciples. The difference between these and

nominal disciples is none spiritually for they are *both* lost. But unlike nominal disciples, who turn back when demands are placed upon them, these disciples appear to be genuine believers because they are joined with other believers even in trying times (Jn.6:70,71). They are willing to pay the cost of discipleship seemingly but they do so out of a wrong motive in their hearts. This category of disciples like Judas Iscariot is oftentimes difficult to discern but they can be known by the fruits they bear (II Cor.11:13-15; Matt. 7:15-20; II Pet. 2:1-3,12-22; Jude 4). These disciples will one day be separated from the real disciples and rejected by the Lord (Matt. 7:21-23). These are the *tares* sown among real believers who will be uprooted by the Lord and bound to be burned (Matt. 13:24-30).

C. Some disciples of the Lord are of course ***genuine*** and they are readily responsive and desirous to do the Lord's will whatever it may involve. They are willing to pay the cost of discipleship because they love the Lord and want to glorify Him in whatever way they can. These are the disciples of the Lord who are really used in His service and produce the kind of fruits that glorify Him. These disciples have a definite mark of identification upon them (Jn.13:34,35).

D. Other disciples of the Lord may be genuine but they are either  
immature or carnal and need to grow. Until these kind of disciples give themselves to follow the Lord they will produce little fruit which will glorify the Lord and they will be used very little in His service. In their present condition they may be doing great detriment to those without Christ and bringing reproach upon the name and the work of the Lord (I Cor. 1:11; 3:3; Eph. 4:4:17-32; II Tim. 2:19-21). There is a big difference between sonship and discipleship.

#### **IV. THE CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP AND WHAT IT OFFERS THE CHRISTIAN WHO ACCEPTS IT**

A. The disciples of the Lord should consider what the outcome or results will be if they fail to follow through as they should (Lk.14:28-35). The Lord Jesus gave three parables to point out what would happen. They would be ridiculed (28-30). It would be a foolish act (31-32). Such individuals would not be fruitful (34,35).

- B. Those who follow the Lord and become like Him through discipleship will be used of the Lord in ways which would otherwise be impossible (Acts 9:1; Rom. 9:1-3).
- C. Disciples of the Lord will be the greatest blessing to others that people can be in this world (Prov.11:30).
- D. Disciples of the Lord will produce fruits which will remain and glorify the Lord (Mk. 1:17).
- E. Disciples of the Lord will be laying up eternal treasures in heaven (Mk. 10:21).
- F. Disciples of the Lord may have tribulations but the Lord will be glorified in and through their lives and blessings will always come out of it (Jn.16:33; Acts 16).