

The Discipline of Disciple-Making: Personal Discipleship Lesson-1: Teaching Them Why Our Life is Only Fed by God's Word

Have you ever been discipled? By that I mean, have you ever sat and learned about the basics of following Christ from someone, one-on-one, where you could pause them and ask questions?

HAVE YOU BEEN PERSONALLY DISCIPLED?

That personal, face-to-face discipleship model: *is what Jesus Christ did in the Four Gospels when He called and trained His 12 disciples.*

That personal, face-to-face discipleship model: *is what we being done in the Book of Acts.*

That personal, face-to-face discipleship model is: *what prompts the letters to individuals and churches that are called the Epistles of the New Testament.*

That personal, face-to-face discipleship model is: *often rare in our fast paced, overwhelmed lives; but it is priceless when given and received.*

I have to admit that no one ever came up to me and asked me if they could teach me the basics of the life of a believer. I went to Sunday School, Youth Group, and countless church services. All were good, all were filled with so much truth, but I never had that model of a Q&A, sit-down, face-to-face discipleship. I had only read about discipleship in books; and read about discipleship in missionary biographies.

So when I started in college, I decided to stop waiting and start getting discipled. I made a list of men that impressed me with their study skills, teaching manner, preaching style, public prayers, Scripture memory, and soul-winning or evangelism skills. Then systematically over an eight-year period I followed, wrote, called, and persisted with that list until I had sat with each one and asked them how to learn to do what they did. It was an amazing time.

Concurrently with all that personal training I began to practice what I was being taught, which was the:

JOY OF POURING OUR LIVES INTO OTHERS

I began to ask a stream of young men if I could mentor, disciple, or train them in prayer, Scripture memory, evangelism, Bible Study, and how to walk in the Spirit with growing obedience in their lives. That was almost 40 years ago, and the process goes on.

There is nothing more rewarding than to obey Christ's command and seeking to teach others what we have been taught. Once a person is saved, discipleship is Matthew 28:20 “teaching them” how to “observe all things” that Jesus left for them to be and to do as His followers. We are all left with a great commission, the one Jesus Christ left for all of His disciples.

I have been discipling individuals for the past 40 years, and learning all I can from everyone I meet who has ever disciplined another believer. This is a life-long process. We can learn so much if we love doing something so much, that we want to learn it better and better. Today is either a call to get started, or a reminder of why we do what we are all called to do.

How do we start? After establishing that the person is saved, the very next truth for them to learn is the:

1. VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SALVATION & THE REST OF LIFE

This connection was taught by Paul in Colossians 2:6. Note with them what Paul said:

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received** Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk** in Him,

The same way God saved us is how we are to follow Christ through life. We hear the Gospel from God's Word, we believe the truth and respond in faith, and God transforms us. That is the pathway of salvation, and the pathway of each day of our life as believers. Taking God at His Word and seeing Him at work in us. That is simple, clear, and easily explained in Scripture.

Paul went on to teach the saints at Colosse that there was even a correspondence to God's Word and the fullness of the Spirit. In fact Paul uses the exact same language to Ephesus for being Spirit-filled (Ephesians 5:18), as he does for being Word-filled (Colossians 3:16-17). Salvation and all the work of God within us by His Spirit are founded upon God's Word. Those are the foundational truths that the Apostle Paul taught as he planted churches across the Roman World.

2. SALVATION IS COMPLETELY TIED TO GOD'S WORD

Turn to the Romans Road, one of the simplest explanations of salvation, and look at the final stop in Romans 10:13 (see also v. 5,8,11).

Romans 10:13-17 (NKJV) For “**whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**” 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of

good things!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” 17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

We are saved by hearing, and responding to the truth of the Word of God. The Gospel flows only from God's Word, and no where else. Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved.

The Jesus that a person believes on, determines their destiny. If you believe in the Jesus that comes from **Joseph Smith** then you become a **Mormon**, not a born-again follower of Christ. If you believe is the Jesus that comes from **Judge Rutherford** then you become a **JW**, not a born-again follower of Christ. If you believe is the Jesus that comes from **Muhammad** then you become a **Muslim**, not a born-again follower of Christ.

Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved. That means:

3. SALVATION IS GOD IMPLANTING HIS WORD INSIDE US

Move onward to James 1:21, from what may be the earliest book of the New Testament written by James who was the Pastor of the First Church of Jerusalem. Here is how he explained salvation to his congregation while Paul was still being trained.

James 1:21 (NKJV) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and **receive** with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**.

Again we see that receiving God's Word, believing God's Word, and acting upon God's Word are all tied to our salvation.

We were saved when we heard the truth of the Gospel contained in God's Word the Scriptures, and responded by faith to God's truth. Think about that in light of what Paul said in Col. 2:6. The same way we were saved is the way we live the rest of our lives.

We hear truth from God.

We believe that truth from God.

We respond to that truth from God

God transforms us.

That is how God has always operated. Before His Word was written down by Moses, God spoke, people heard, believed, responded, and were transformed. Now God's Word is complete. We hold everything God wants us to know.

Just as in salvation we heard, believed, responded, and God transformed us by salvation: so each new day:

GOD TOUCHES OUR LIFE THROUGH HIS WORD

We spend time with God in His Word, as James says in this verse:

To hear His voice speaking truth into our life; and

To hold onto that truth from God by faith; and

To respond obediently to what God has said; and then

To see God transform us.

One of the greatest confirmations of our salvation is seeing this happen each day. That is exactly what we see the Apostles teaching as they planted and established churches in the First Century.

Now move onward to 1 Peter 1:22 to 2:3 and see how Peter describes this exact same process when he explains the relationship between salvation and our daily walk in Christ. Peter reminds us that both are tied to God's Word.

4. SALVATION STARTS A LIFE OF BELIEVING & OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Peter is near the end of his life, and after walking with Jesus, serving as an Apostle for over 30 years this is his summary of salvation for all the rest of the ages of Christ's Church.

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (NKJV) Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit** in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³ **having been born again, not of corruptible seed but through the word of God which lives and abides forever,** ²⁴ because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, ²⁵ But the **word of the Lord** endures forever." Now this is the **word which by the gospel was preached to you.** 2:1-3 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word,** that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed **you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

Note how simply and clearly Peter also links God's work of salvation in us, to His Word.

Salvation is regeneration by the Holy Spirit using God's Word: (v. 22 *purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*).

Salvation is the new birth of coming alive through the power of God's Word (v. 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God).

Salvation is eternal because the Gospel in God's Word is eternal: (v. 25 the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you).

Then Peter gives the essence of our new life in Christ.

5. THE ESSENCE OF A BELIEVER'S LIFE IS GOD'S WORD

Born again believers are **only fed** with God's Word: (v. 2a as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word).

Born again believers can **only grow** by God's Word: (v. 2b that you may grow thereby).

Born again believers **can taste God's grace** in God's Word: (v. 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious).

So Paul, James & Peter all agree about the connection of God's Word to salvation, and the vital role that God's Word has to our continued new walk. The final link comes from the greatest authority of them all: our Jesus Christ. Please turn with me to Matthew 4:4.

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man **shall not live** by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus actually quotes these words in Matthew 4:4 from Deuteronomy 8:3; and lays out the vital need for our spiritual lives to be fed as consistently as our physical bodies. In Deuteronomy 8 where Jesus quotes this verse from the context is about manna, the food God sent to feed Israel's 603,000 families each day so they survived the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness of Sinai.

Jesus says God's Word is necessary for spiritual life as vitally as bread was for their survival. So we could apply Mt. 4:4 by saying that:

6. JESUS SAID, "EAT GOD'S WORD TO LIVE"

Jesus compared **God's Word** to food ("man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God"). Jesus said we are not really living if we only feed our physical bodies and not our spiritual dimension. Jesus said we need to eat every day; and our spiritual lives are to be as consistent a part of our daily plans as eating.

Jesus goes on to compare **salvation** to food. Those who eat of Him are saved. Look onward at John 6. Jesus said He was the bread of God (Jn. 6:35), those who ate Him live forever.

Jesus says **salvation is eating and drinking Him** by faith through receiving His Word.

John 6:35 (NKJV) And Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life.** He who **comes** to Me shall **never hunger**, and he who **believes** in Me shall **never thirst**."

Then He said that what we eat are His words. Look at this amazing passage.

John 6:63-68 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have **the words of eternal life.**"

Now turn onward to John 8:31,37,43,51 (NKJV):

v. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you **abide in My word**, you are **My disciples indeed**. 32 And you shall **know the truth**, and the **truth shall make you free**.” [*Three elements: believers are those who abide/remain in Christ's words; believers know/experience the truth of Christ's words; believers are set free through believing/acting upon the truth of Christ's words.*]

v. 37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because **My word has no place in you**. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are **not able to listen to My word**. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is **no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [*Three elements: Christ's word remains in true believers; true believers desire to hear Christ's words; true believers stand on the truth of Christ's words within them.*]

v. 45 But because I **tell the truth**, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I **tell the truth**, why do you not believe Me? 47 He **who is of God hears God’s words**; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if **anyone keeps My word he shall never see death**.” [*Three elements: believers know Christ's words are true; believers hear/respond to Christ's words; believers are eternally saved by clinging to Christ as truth.*]

That is why the early church taught that hearing & believing God's Word leads us to salvation, and to partaking of Christ. As only physical food enters our body and nourishes it, to sustain our lives: *so our souls are only fed by God’s Word entering into our minds.*

How did we believe on Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How did we receive Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we obey Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we follow Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we please Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we know Christ better and better? *Through **His Word**.*

7. GOD'S WORD BECOMES THE MOST VITAL ELEMENT OF THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

That is the simple truth.

The place of God's Word in your mind today dictates your spiritual health.

Everything is contained in God's Word: our food and drink, our map for life, the light to guide us, the sword to protect us, the exercises to strengthen us, and the revelation of God’s character to grow us.

One of the most afflicted Old Testament saints was Jeremiah. He was called the weeping prophet for a purpose. Jeremiah's testimony of how he made it through a lifetime of pain, sorrow, loneliness, and discouragement is our closing thought.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NKJV) Your words were **found**, and **I ate them**, And **Your word** was to me **the joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am called by **Your name**, O Lord God of hosts.

TEACHING THEM WHY OUR LIFE IS ONLY FED BY GOD'S WORD

1. Connection Between Salvation & The Rest Of Life (Col. 2:6)
2. Salvation is Completely Tied to God's Word (Rom. 10:17)
3. Salvation is God Implanting His Word Inside Us (James 1:21)
4. Salvation Starts a Life of Believing & Obeying God's Word (1 Peter 1:22-23)
5. The Essence of a Believer's Life is God's Word (Mt.4:4)
6. Jesus Said, "Eat God's Word to Live" (John 6:63)
7. God's Word Becomes the Most Vital Element of the Life of the Believer (Jer. 15:16)