

THE PILLARS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Being a disciple of Jesus requires a commitment to spiritual growth throughout your life (e.g. in knowledge, in service, in faith, in holiness). Although this can seem intimidating, the Bible demonstrates some key elements that will serve as catalysts for growth. Think of these like pillars that support the framework of a house. Therefore, if you want to continually grow and mature as a disciple of Christ, you will need each of these pillars in your life.

JOHN 8:30-32

Just believing who Jesus is is not enough to be and grow as His disciple (Matthew 7:21-23; James 2:14-26). Instead, Jesus taught that people must continue in His words of truth to really be His disciples (now contained within the New Testament Scriptures (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:3-6). These words of truth will set people free from sin and are the stimulant for spiritual growth (Romans 6:17-18; 1 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 20:32)! To continue in Jesus's words requires that you actively and meekly seek to learn what He teaches and put those words into obedient action in your life (James 1:19-27). For, if you do not *learn* His word, you cannot believe what He teaches or know His ways. Then, if you do not *obey* His word, you deceive yourself and your life will fail to look like Jesus's.

LUKE 10:38-42

Opportunities to listen to Jesus must be prioritized by anyone interested in being His disciple (e.g. Luke 6:20-49; 8:4-18; 11:1-13). That is what Mary did on this occasion (sitting at His feet). There are, however, always many other things that can be done in life besides learning from Jesus. Some of these are immoral and others are not. For Martha, it seems that she simply chose to do some work

around the house to prepare things for her guests. Yet, she neglected the greater opportunity to learn from Jesus at that moment. Today, every disciple must prioritize opportunities to learn from Jesus (Matthew 6:19-24)!

LUKE 9:57-62

Many may want to follow Jesus without recognizing the full commitment and priority doing such demands from them. On this occasion, following Jesus required people to physically follow Him so they could learn from Him as He traveled to various places and join Him in His mission. Today, being His disciple still requires a great personal commitment that must put following Him above everything and everyone else in your life. For, there are many things that discipleship requires of you on a personal level (e.g. time spent studying God's word, serving, giving, holiness, worship, obedience, etc.). You cannot be His disciple and will not grow effectively as a disciple if you start on the path of discipleship and then look back in ways that desire the kind of life you lived before following Him (e.g. immorality, worldly/selfish priorities, etc.). From now on, you must be focused on following Jesus and whatever that requires as a matter of priority!

HEBREWS 10:23-25

God has designed the local church to be a base of fellowship and strength that is greater than the individual. Jesus wants His disciples to join themselves to other disciples in their local geographic area to worship, work, fellowship, and help one another as they each seek to follow Jesus (Acts 9:26-28). This passage demonstrates the importance of Jesus's disciples trying to stimulate one another to love and good works and not neglecting (forsaking) their assembling (gathering) together. God has designed the assemblies of the local church as an important aspect of worship and spiritual growth that must be prioritized by disciples of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16). Yet, God expects Jesus's disciples to share in all aspects of the local church and not just attend and consume what the church offers.

HEBREWS 3:12-13

There is a real danger of Jesus's disciples turning away from Him (John 6:66; Hebrews 3:7-11). Satan works every day to lie to and deceive disciples of Christ. So, regular (daily) interaction with other disciples of Christ is critical to both enduring and growing. This passage represents just one of many that teach the responsibilities disciples have toward "one another" (e.g. Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Peter 4:8-11; James 5:19-20). Here, Jesus teaches there must be daily encouragement between His disciples to help counteract the daily attacks of Satan against them. This, though, implies there must be interaction between disciples of Christ outside the church assemblies. For, although the church assemblies are important, they are not designed to provide all that is needed for your spiritual health and growth!

ACTS 2:42-47

This passage gives insight into what was required for the spiritual growth of those who were spiritual babies in Christ who needed to grow and mature (Acts 2:36-41). What we see happening in this text is exactly what we have seen as pillars of growth throughout this lesson. They learned from Christ through the apostles' teaching. They were personally devoted to learning from and following Christ. They gathered with the church. And, they cared for and spent time with one another outside the church assemblies. This pattern is carried throughout the entire New Testament.

CONCLUSION

The words of Jesus are the catalyst of spiritual growth and development. Those who truly desire to grow as disciples of Christ must commit personally to learning from and following Jesus, join themselves together with a faithful local church and be actively involved with such, and interact with other disciples of Christ every day. These pillars contributed to the growth in Jesus's disciples throughout the New Testament and continue to be effective today. If any of these pillars are not effectively working in your life, you will not grow as a disciple in the way God has intended!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What role does belief have in discipleship?

What role does Jesus's words of truth have in your growth as a disciple?

Why is it important to prioritize learning from Jesus?

What role does your commitment to being Jesus's disciple have in your growth as a disciple?

How will conducting yourself as you had before being Jesus's disciple hinder your growth?

What role does being part of a local church have in your growth as a disciple?

What role does regular interaction with other disciples have in your growth as a disciple?

How do the examples of the early church in the New Testament demonstrate all the pillars of growth necessary for Jesus's disciples?