

Discipleship Skills

PREPAREDNESS: BEING READY TO DISCIPLE OTHERS

The work of making disciples for Jesus Christ is the great mission Jesus has given all His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). It should be considered a great privilege for any disciple to take part in fulfilling this mission. But it is also a great responsibility that must be taken seriously! Therefore, it is not a work that should be entered without the proper preparations being made. Without a person preparing to do this work well, the result could be something that displeases God rather than pleases Him. Consider, therefore, some areas in which preparations must be made.

LUKE 6:39-40

Since a disciple learns from and follows a teacher, the teacher matters. As students and followers of Jesus, our goal should be to give teachings and examples that help people imitate Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9; Hebrews 13:7) and glorify God (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 3:1-2). However, if we have not properly prepared both our teachings and examples according to the ways of Jesus Christ, we can push people away from God and cause Him to be blasphemed (Matthew 23:1-7, 15; Romans 2:17-24). Therefore, you must examine your life and teachings closely to see if you are truly in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5) and one who (though imperfect) is prepared to lead others to Jesus Christ, as a fully trained disciple who is like the Master Teacher. For if you are blind (in your understanding of truth and/or in the way you live), you will only be able to lead others into this same blindness (Matthew 15:1-20)!

ROMANS 8:9-11

God expects the Spirit of Christ to live in His people. This is both crucial to living as a disciple of Christ and to making disciples for Christ! For Christ's character was critical to the way He made disciples (e.g., love, compassion, humility, meekness, patience). Through God's word, you must learn the teachings of Christ and the example of how Christ lived so that you will imitate Him and walk in His steps (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Peter 2:21-25). If your character fails to reflect the Spirit of Christ living in you, you will present unnecessary

obstacles to those you are trying to disciple for Jesus (e.g., your pride, selfishness, greed, anger)!

GALATIANS 5:16-26

This passage should cause you to honestly reflect on the fruit that is being produced by your life: Whether it is producing the fruit of someone who is focused on the things of the flesh or whether it is producing the fruit of someone who is focused on spiritual things and the things revealed by the Spirit of God in the Bible. Although you may find yourself falling to the temptations of the flesh at times, you must prepare yourself by considering which is truly winning the war in your life. Examine your fruit and see how often your life produces the fruit of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. Examine if your harvest for the Lord is increasing and your harvest for the flesh is decreasing. Examine whether you have truly crucified the desires of your flesh in the pursuit of living for the Lord (Galatians 2:20). Certainly, the works of the flesh will negatively impact your ability and credibility to make disciples for the Lord. Then, each fruit of the Spirit will prove immensely valuable in the work of discipleship! Study each one carefully and reflect on whether it is present and active in your life. Not only will they help you have credibility to make disciples for Jesus (as people will see Him reflected in your life), but it will help people be able to imitate Jesus by imitating what they see in you (1 Corinthians 11:1)!

HEBREWS 5:11-14

Part of the work of discipleship will be to share the knowledge of Jesus's teachings contained in Scripture. This will also include answering questions and helping people come to both an initial saving faith in Jesus and a growing faith that helps them become rooted in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:9-12; 2:4-7). But you cannot teach what you do not know for yourself. Therefore, to help others be and grow as disciples of Christ, you must not be lazy in studying the Scriptures. Instead, you must put in the work to grow in the knowledge of the Lord (1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Peter 3:14-18). Then, you will be equipped to lead others to an accurate and true understanding of what Jesus teaches (even though you will always have more to learn). For you must consider it a most serious responsibility to teach God's word in any capacity and only do so whenever you are confident that you understand what is true (James 3:1-12; Luke 6:39-40)!

1 PETER 3:13-17

This passage should challenge you to prepare yourself with courage. Although there may be times you will suffer for doing the will of God, standing for what is right, and teaching others to do the same, you must not become fearful so that you will be swayed or stopped from your mission. Instead, you must set Christ the Lord apart in your heart and be prepared at any moment (no matter the situation or consequence) to properly give an answer/defense for the hope that is in you! This implies that you will be prepared with the knowledge needed to answer such questions and seize the opportunities, and implies that Christ is firmly reigning as King of your life. Then, you must also prepare yourself (e.g., with the Spirit of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit) to answer with gentleness, reverence, and in a way that does not give any ammunition to those who want to accuse you of wrongdoing (Titus 2:6-8)!

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2, 24-26

If you want to be the most effective you can be in discipling others, you will have been learning the truths of Jesus Christ for some time and be prepared to pass them on to others. If you're not knowledgeable enough about how to teach someone to come to the saving faith of Jesus Christ or to mature in Christ, then you should spend time preparing yourself with that knowledge. If you do have that knowledge, you need to prepare yourself with the ability to teach. This includes both having the proper information, as well as the skill to communicate that right information to others in the right way! Notice the focus of this work is to rescue souls from ignorance and sin, not winning arguments. So, you will need to prepare yourself with meekness and patience, among the other fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)!

CONCLUSION

Before you get to work in the mission of making disciples for Jesus, you must make sure you have prepared yourself so that whatever you do may be beneficial in Christ's service rather than hindering it. Although you must not wait until you know everything or never have more improvements to make in your life, you are not prepared to disciple others if you are ignorant of the truth, willfully engaging in sin, or have not matured in the faith. Therefore, you should carefully evaluate your life and get to work filling the voids so that you can be prepared to lead others to be true disciples of Jesus Christ!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Why is the teacher important in discipleship?

What damage can be done to another if your teaching and example are not right?

What is the Spirit of Christ, and how does it impact your effectiveness in disciple-making?

How will the works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit impact your effectiveness in disciple-making?

What impact does your knowledge of spiritual truths have on your effectiveness in disciple-making?

Why is having courage an important preparation for disciple-making?

How must you prepare yourself to give a defense to those you ask concerning the hope that is in you?

What are some specific characteristics that are critical in the work of disciple-making?

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