

The Basic Teachings of a Strong Disciple

By Doug Hamilton

Jesus call to make disciples of the nations

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- Jesus gave the charge to His apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations. The word *disciple* means *a follower of another's teachings*. In this case the disciples to be made would be after the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- The apostles were to take the message of His death, burial and resurrection to the entire world, bringing the hope of eternal life for those whom would respond. Their initial response was to be obedience to that core principle of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ by being baptized. This is why it resembles the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, for that is the basis of all that Jesus would teach to be followed.
- They were to be baptized into the possession of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, understanding that they were to be fully committed from the heart to that pattern of teaching (Rom 6:17-18).
- This tends to be the primary focus of the Churches of Christ, for we emphasize the initial making of the disciple, but tend to neglect the keeping of the disciple. On the second half of the Great Commission to Discipleship of Christ, the focus is on the keeping of the disciple. This is carried out in the continual teaching of the newly committed disciple. They are to be taught to observe the commands of Christ, for they cannot be a follower of Christ if they do not know the path of Christ.
- With that in mind we will be covering some basic teachings of the disciple that are quite pertinent to the continuing process of discipleship.

A Disciple must be taught humility.

Matthew 18:1-6 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,³ and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- The disciples came to Jesus, jockeying for position and being divisive. Jesus brought a young child as a prop to illustrate the lesson of humility. Children were pretty low in the pecking order of that culture. They had the perception that “Children were to be seen and not heard.” His disciples would have done well to learn that lesson, for humility will always serve the disciple well.
- It is not enough to come out of the waters of your baptism, we must be continually teaching the lessons of humility or we run the risk of losing another soul to the world.
 - Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

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- Romans 15:1-2 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.
- As a disciple of Christ, we must be continually taught the command of humility.

A Disciple must be taught to avoid being a stumbling block.

Matthew 18:7-11 “Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! ⁸ “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹ “If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. ¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”

- A stumbling block is something that someone intentionally or unintentionally leaves in the path of another that could lead to a stumble in their faith. There are many things that we have a right to as a Christian, but might have to forfeit if it could legitimately cause another to stumble in their faith.
 - Romans 14:13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.
 - 1 Corinthians 8:9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.
- If a disciple of Christ is not taught this concerning their relationships together, it could lead to disaster in the church.

A Disciple must be taught to value every soul.

Matthew 12:12-14 “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³ “If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴ “So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

- Every soul in and out of the church is valuable to the Father. He does not want anyone to perish, but to be in heaven with Him on that last day.
 - 1 Timothy 2:4 “...who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - 2 Peter 3:9 He is “...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
 - John 3:17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”
- Too many times we as disciples of Christ forget that. We forget that God loves the faithful brother as much as the erring brother. He loves the soul of the celibate as much as the soul of the homosexual. He wants the reputable businessman and the jailed prisoner in heaven. We must never forget that or we will not be able to carry out a disciple’s walk,

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for we will not live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Every disciple must be taught to this command of God if they are ever going to be a true disciple of God.

A Disciple must be taught the structure of discipline.

Matthew 18:15-18 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ “But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

- There is a structure that we are commanded to use when dealing with strife in the church family.
 1. If someone does something against you, go to him or her in private and tell them what is on your mind. Put them in a position to be won over and see the hurt that they have caused you. If they listen to you, GREAT!
 2. If they refuse to listen to you, which is the primary factor in divisiveness, take a couple of non-partisan witnesses and have them listen to it. Hopefully the offender could see the consensus and change his mind concerning the offense. If he has, the GREAT!
 3. If that offender does not listen to the consensus, then expand it to the church family for consensus. This is in essence a congregational intervention, designed to win that brother over from the error of his way. If he listens to the congregation, then GREAT, you have won him over.
 4. If he does not yield to the consensus of the congregation and desires to continue in the same destructive path, then he is to be cut off from the congregation like a heathen and a tax-gatherer. Perhaps down the road he or she will desire to get right with the congregation and the Lord, coming forward and confessing their sins. If so, then restore them. If not, then his blood shall be upon him.
- This is the pattern the disciples of Christ are commanded to be followed in the church. It is when we fail to teach and observe this sound advice that things go quite poorly.
 - Many times people might want to skip the final stages and jump right to the shunning. If you see someone doing this, then teach them the right way.
 - Sometimes people do not want to go to another in private and pride steps in the way. If you see someone doing this, then teach them the right way.
 - Sometimes none of the steps are followed and the result is chaos in the lives of the members. If you see someone doing this, then teach them the right way.
- We must be teaching the disciples to observe this because the primary ingredient in a disciple is DISCIPLINE.

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A Disciple must be taught to walk in forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21-27 Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.²⁴ “When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.²⁵ “But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.²⁶ “So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’²⁷ “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

- Peter wanted to know how many times we ought to forgive another. Thinking that seven times was the answer, he was promptly corrected by Jesus about being willing to forgive seventy-times seven. Immediately Jesus began a parable that called a man to examine his own forgiveness through the eyes of a king.
- Simply put, God forgave us of our sins when we entered a covenant with Him. He wiped away a lifetime of debt when we humbled ourselves to Him.
 - Jeremiah 31:34 “...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
 - Romans 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”
 - Colossians 2:13-14 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
- If we are not careful about walking in forgiveness, we could find out that we might walk right out of forgiveness. Too many times we forget that God has been extremely patient with us and end up not walking in remembrance of that forgiveness. This is something that every disciple of Christ must be continually reminded of in the classroom and from the pulpit.

A Disciple must be taught to forgive.

Matthew 18:28-35 “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’²⁹ “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’³⁰ “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.³¹ “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.³² “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’³⁴ “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.³⁵ “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

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- That particular disciple did not remember what the Master did for him and began to shakedown a fellow servant for a couple of dollars owed him. When his fellow servant asked for mercy, he was not showed any, being thrown in prison and separated from his family.
 - Matthew 6:14-15 “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.
 - Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
 - Colossians 3:13 “...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
- When we are unwilling to forgive a brother or sister, the price that we pay is staggering:
 - Guilt and grief eat away at the conscience.
 - Disintegrating relationships of those in your life.
 - Development of the inability to understand the forgiveness of God.
 - Rejection on the Day of Judgment by God Himself.
- We must teach all disciples to obey the commandment of forgiveness of others. If we fail to do so, it will likely cost many souls in the end.

Jesus said that His disciples must be taught. Here are some musts in the teaching.

- A Disciple must be taught humility.
- A Disciple must be taught to avoid being a stumbling block.
- A Disciple must be taught to value every soul.
- A Disciple must be taught the structure of discipline.
- A Disciple must be taught to walk in forgiveness.
- A Disciple must be taught to forgive.