

Keeping the Discipleship

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, someone who had already been followers, are being asked to multiply for Jesus Christ. They 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.

The initial response of the listeners of the message of gospel was to be baptized. This is because it resembled the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, for that is the basis of all that Jesus would teach to be followed. As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" The apostles were told to baptize them 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. The focus of this lesson is on the second half of the Great Commission to Discipleship of Christ, the keeping of the disciple. This is carried out in the continual teaching of the newly committed disciple, "*teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*". 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 for which we are to walk. With that in mind we will be covering some basic teachings of the disciple that are quite pertinent to the continuing process of discipleship.

1) 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 were jockeying for position and being divisive. Jesus brought a young child as an example 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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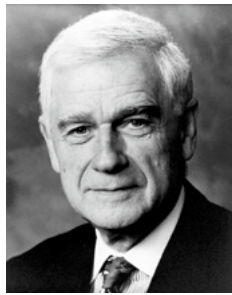
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- Romans 15:1-2, Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

As a disciple of Christ, we must be continually taught the command of humility. This is not something that comes natural for a person, but must be taught.

Political Humility

It was January, 1973 in Washington DC. It had been a long day on Capitol Hill for Democratic Senator John Stennis. He was looking forward to a bit of relaxation when he got home. After parking the car in front of his house, he began to walk toward his front door. All of a sudden, two, thuggish teenagers burst out of the darkness, mugging and shooting him twice, leaving him for dead. Senator Stennis was the chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and the news about the incident spread quickly. For the next seven hours, Senator Stennis was on the operating table at Walter Reed Hospital.



A fellow senator, a Republican named Mark Hatfield, heard on the radio of the shooting. He immediately turned his car around and drove to the hospital on his fellow senator. He noticed that the staff was completely hectic and unable to handle the incoming calls to the switchboard. When Hatfield saw the unattended seat in the switchboard, he sat down, and voluntarily went to work. For the next ten hours, he sat there taking the calls.

When the calls had finally subsided in the morning, he stood up, stretched, put on his overcoat, and just before leaving, he introduced himself quietly to the other operator, "I'm Mark Hatfield. Happy to help out." Then Senator Mark Hatfield unobtrusively walked out. The press could hardly handle that story. There seemed to be no way for a conservative Republican to give a liberal Democrat a tip of the hat, let alone spend hours doing a menial task and be "happy to help out." Even politicians can demonstrate humility if they desire to do so.

2) A disciple must be taught Consideration.

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 which someone intentionally or unintentionally places in the path of another which 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.

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- 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.

People are selfish at the core of their soul. If a disciple of Christ is not taught consideration for others concerning their relationships with others, it could lead to disaster in the church. They must be taught the quality of consideration by not causing stumbling blocks for others and vice-versa.

The Newly Converted Stumbling Block

Many years ago when I was a student preacher in Texas, I converted a young lady in her twenties name Lillian. She did not grow up in the church and came from a very rough background. She was very happy to be a Christian and began working on many areas of her life. One area which was overlooked was in the way she dressed. She came to the church the first few months dressed in a way which was not modest. She did not know any better, but it did upset some of the other members.



Some of the men approached her following a mid-week service and said that she needed to dress more appropriately when coming to the church building. She did not take that message well and interpreted it as being judgmental. Lillian did not come back to worship for couple of weeks. I spoke with the men that it was not the best way to handle it and made the suggestion to teach her the lesson of consideration. A couple of them and their wives made a visit to her home. With the husbands speaking, they said that Lillian was a very beautiful lady and that they are weak in the area of distraction in such a way. They made the appeal to her to help them to not stumble in their weakness.

This approach worked much better and she gladly corrected the behavior. It was a good thing because about three months later she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had a surgery and radiation, taking her away from her employment. The church family helped her with her bills, meals and prayer. She made it through in the end and continued on in the faith. She learned the lesson of Consideration.

3) A disciple must be taught Evangelism.

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.”

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- 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 Jesus Christ forget this. 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. We must never forget that unless we train the coming generation of disciples on how to lead others to Christ, there may not be a generation after that. Jesus taught His disciples the importance of evangelism.

- Matthew 5:13-16, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”
- Matthew 4:18, Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

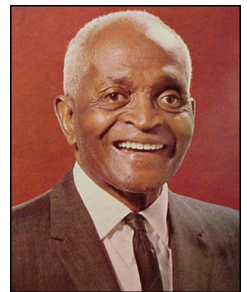
As one writer said, “*With all our education, our fine buildings, our image of the church, we are doing less to win people to Christ than our unschooled forefathers did. We’re no longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium, and we spend most of our time swiping fish from each other’s bowl.*”

Every disciple must be taught to this command of God if they are ever going to be a true disciple of Jesus. As Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:2, “*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” Disciples must be taught to Evangelize.

Marshall Keeble: A Disciple-Encouraged Evangelist

Marshall Keeble was born near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, December 7, 1878. He was the son of former slaves, Robert and Mittie Keeble. At the age of four, his family moved to Nashville. He was baptized by Preston Taylor in the Gay Street Christian Church in 1895. Keeble was seventeen years old. He was never educated beyond the seventh grade. His first job was working in a bucket factory six to ten hours a day at around 40¢ per hour.

The men of the church made sure that Marshall made evangelism a priority. Marshall Keeble began preaching in 1897 with the support and encouragement of his father-in-law, S.W. Womack and other preachers. He became a powerful force in the brotherhood, being a traveling gospel preacher throughout the southern United States. He valued every soul he encountered and made sure they knew how much Jesus loved them. He often would baptize many dozens of souls.



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At the age of 83, Keeble became a world traveler. On his first journey (the summer of 1962), he toured Palestine, then proceeded on to Nigeria, where Keeble preached day and night to large audiences. While in Nigeria, he was made an honorary chief of one tribe. The second journey began in October 1962, which took all the way around the world. Their first stop was Nigeria, where Keeble engaged in training preachers. From Nigeria, he went traveled to Ethiopia, India, Singapore and Korea.

He preached his last sermon on April 17, 1968, three days before accidentally scalding himself to death in his bathtub. By the time of his death at the age of 89, I was estimated he had baptized over 40,000 people and started more than 250 congregations. Thank God for the men in his life which convinced Him of the importance of evangelism!

Jesus requires His disciples to be taught. They must be taught in Humility, Consideration and Evangelism. What would happen to our church family if we were to have some classes and ministries which focused on being humble, showing consideration for others and how to lead others to Christ? Jesus was serious about the teaching aspect of discipleship. Let us live in such a way that reflects this. In part two of this lesson, we will cover four other areas of education to focus on.