

## **Discipleship Conf '19**

### **Issues of Discipleship (what to do when...)**

First, allow me to say how honored I am to be speaking today. Many of you are my heroes and to have this opportunity is incredibly humbling and exciting at the same time. I would like to say that I am no expert on discipleship. Every time I disciple someone, I realize that discipleship is as much a classroom for the discipler as it is for the disciple. I continue to learn about discipleship and consider myself a disciple to this day.

I would like to share my testimony with you briefly. I believe this will be helpful as I try to relate practical application to what I will be sharing today. I have been in church most of my life. My mom made sure that we were there every time the doors were open. I made a profession of faith at the age of seven with a very mixed up view of God and salvation. At 13 I tried marijuana for the first time and really liked it. At 14 I got drunk for the first time and really liked it. By the time I was 21 I was a full-blown alcoholic and drug addict. I was arrested for drinking and driving in '91, '92, '93, and '94. The last arrest was a felony and I faced 3 years in prison. While I was in jail serving a 60 day sentence for a previous conviction I gave my life to Christ and have never looked back. During the next 42 days in jail I read every footnote in my Study Bible and the New Testament almost twice. What else was I gonna do, right? I got out of jail in May 1995 and since that day I have not touched alcohol or drugs and have tried my best to live for Jesus and lead others to Him. I was convicted of the felony and served 5 years of probation. I didn't have to go to prison praise the Lord. I didn't drive a car in America for five years and during that time I earned two associate degrees while working fulltime, started attending Decatur Baptist Church, got discipled, discipled others and taught just about every class there was to teach at DBC. In 2005 I was hired on staff at DBC and served there seven years, four of which I lead the Life on Life discipleship ministry of the church. Since leaving the DBC staff I have pastored a church in Kentucky and now pastor in Moulton, AL where I have served for 5 and a half years.

I wanted to share that because it gives reference to what I know about discipleship and how I model discipleship today. Experience is a great teacher and I have had many great mentors along the way. So, when we talk about issues that may arise in discipleship there is no way we can cover everything. So, what I would like to do is cover the main points I believe to be the most common in one on one discipleship. And again, I am no expert but these are things that God has used to teach me along the way.

#### **I. Understand Your Disciple**

**A. This may seem like a funny place to start but I believe it is very important to start with. Any success in discipleship will be built upon the relationship you have with your disciple. Honestly, this is where I see much of discipleship break down. The end game of discipleship is to reproduce yourself. Reproduce the Bible student you are, the prayer warrior you are, the servant you are, the evangelist you are. None of that happens without relationship. Listen to the relationship that Jesus had with His disciples in John 15.**

**1. John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."**

*a) It has always amazed me that the Lord of the universe would call these men his friends when He had every right to call them His servants. But that is the relationship Jesus created with them. That is the relationship He developed. All success in discipleship builds upon relationship. First a personal relationship with Christ and second on the relationship with your discipler or disciple.*

(1) Allow me to bring this into context. When I started attending church after my release from jail I really loved the Lord but I really didn't know squat about the Bible. I had been taught morals but I had not lived much of what I had been taught. I had lived this way so long that doing wrong was second nature to me. So, when I started trying to live for Christ and live His word it was difficult. Not long into my discipleship, a couple of months or so, I started dating a girl that I worked with. She was not a Christian, but at the time I didn't think there was anything wrong with that. So, one night after work we went back to her place to spend the night. We didn't have sex, and we actually slept in our clothes. Harmless, right? The next morning I woke upon under enormous conviction. After she carried me home I cried and cried and could not figure out why I felt so bad. So, I called my discipler and asked to meet him. my mom drove me to the church, I sat down still crying to discuss with my discipler what was going on. I'll never forget what he said that day. He said, "Well, if this doesn't mean more to you than that, you can just turn your books back in and we are done!" I'll never forget that.

*(a) Now that sounds harsh but let me tell you something. My discipler could be that firm with me because he knew me. He had spent time getting to know me. He had spent time praying with me. He had spent time pouring the word of God into me. He had spent time with me convincing me that my life was not ruined because I was a convicted felon, drug addict alcoholic. He had spent time sharing the love of Christ with me and making me believe that there wasn't another person on earth that wanted me to succeed more than he did.*

i. I didn't turn in my books. I met with him for about another hour that day. He showed me in the word where that relationship was not right. I went to work, shared the gospel with my girlfriend, she rejected Christ, I broke up with her, and learned a great life lesson in the process.

**B. Disciplers, if we don't take the time and effort to really get to know our disciples and be their friends, we will potentially cause problems not just in our relationship but in every relationship your disciple engages in past your relationship. I love what Paul said in Philippians 2:19-22...**

**1. Philippians 2:19-22, "19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel."**

**C. Another note is to have a good grasp of what Jay is teaching today on the 7 levels/stages of discipleship and what Kenny is teaching on the cost of discipleship.**

## **II. Zeal Without Knowledge**

**A. The most exciting time to disciple someone is when they have recently received Christ or that have reevaluated their life and recommitted it to Christ. Those people are contagious. Everyone loves the excitement of a new baby. But in discipleship, young Christians with all of their zeal proposes some challenges. Let's talk about a couple of those challenges now.**

### **1. Legalism**

*a) Let's not forget that it was the weaker brother who had a problem with eating meat in 1 Corinthians 8. But Paul didn't kill them for their immaturity. He lovingly corrected them.*

*(1) Man will always be drawn to compare spirituality on outward works, appearances, rules, and regulations. Legalism poses to be a problem many times in discipleship. It is so easy for a young Christian to start looking on what they do and get distracted from Christ by what others are or aren't doing. Be careful with this because this is a time in a disciple's life where loving them will teach them how to love others and Christ.*

*b) The main focus in confronting legalism is directing the person who struggles to love the word of God above all and teaching them the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*

*(1) Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*

*c) Again, I remember struggling with this as a young Christian. And it was my discipler who helped me understand the important concept that I am not God. 2 Corinthians 10:7, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's."*

## 2. Us against them attitude X 2

a) *Many times in a young Christians life they tend to put their experience with Christ and faith family above all others. They potentially develop a mindset that if God is moving anywhere other than their sphere of faith something must be wrong or have trouble believing that could happen. This creates a critical or skeptical mindset that is detrimental to a Christians growth. Even Jesus dealt with this with His disciples and gives us the key to helping our disciples overcome that attitude.*

(1) Luke 9:49-50, "49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

b) *Also, young Christians may fall into the trap of hating their enemies. I know that sounds absurd, but have you looked on Facebook in a while. It seems that so many people who call themselves Christians have a hard time loving people who do not agree with their politics much less the truth of the Bible. Again, Jesus dealt with this as well with His disciples.*

(1) Luke 9:51-56, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

c) *In either case the Lord's example is love those who are not a part of your camp and love those who are your enemies. One of the hardest questions for people to answer and live is this; who does the Lord not love. The pages of scripture clearly declare that God loves everyone in the world. He loves those who hate Him, and are against Him, lost in other religions and philosophies just as much as He loves you. How do I know He loves them? Because He is willing to forgive anyone who ask for it. And you cannot forgive without love. And He has declared in what we have just read that we are to recognize what manner of spirit we are of and develop a heart of love that responds with grace towards our enemies. We must not only teach that to our disciples but example that spirit as Jesus did.*

## III. False Doctrine

**A. From time to time the case arises in discipleship where the disciple has received some bad teaching. That is a challenge I am sure we all have faced from time to time. So how do you help your disciple see the truth without damaging the relationship you have worked so hard to build. The best way to answer that is to look at what happened with Apollos in Acts 18.**

1. **Acts 18:24-28, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”**
- B. It is clear that Aquilla and Priscilla were special people. I love the fact that this guy gets up and speaks in the synagogue and two lay people help him get straight doctrinally. I wished all the people in our churches knew the Bible so well that if we preached and made a mistake in reference or doctrine, they could scripturally help us be straight. That’s what Aquilla and Priscilla did. Here are a few things to point out about what they did right to help Apollos.**
1. **They helped him privately. I love the phrase, “they took him unto them.” That means they did it privately and not at the back door of the synagogue or in front of others. In all likely hood they brought him to their house to speak with him and help him.**
    - a) *As disciplers that is how we should help our disciples in any setting. One on one is where help is most effective.*
  2. **They next “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”**
    - a) *Let me first say what I eluded to with those in our churches earlier. If we are going to disciple others we better know the word of God so that we can lead our disciples in the word of God. that is exactly what Aquilla and Priscilla did with Apollos.*
  3. **They loved him.**
    - a) *The Bible doesn’t say that they loved him. but the Bible doesn’t say that they rebuked him either. They just exposed him to the truth. When you love the word of God and you are dedicate to its truth, it is sometimes hard to hold back from dropping the hammer on people who may be wrong. In discipleship we should seek to build up our disciple with the truth. I am not talking about being passive. I am talking about a firm commitment to teaching properly so that the end result will be as it was with Apollos. He went on to teach the word of God after that meeting and did well. And that is what we want from our disciples.*
- C. The issue that may arise in this area is if you have a disciple unlike Apollos who has an unteachable spirit.**

1. **Proverbs 13:18, “Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.”**
2. **Proverbs 9:9, “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”**

Conclusion: Discipleship absolutely changed my life. I can honestly say that without discipleship I would not be here speaking to you today. My prayer for you is that you would seek the Lord daily for the purpose of not only enhancing your walk with Him, but to enable someone else to have and build on a walk with Christ for themselves, so they can in turn lead someone in the same.

Extra that may be covered in the question answer time:

#### **How to dissolve a discipleship relationship?**

- This does happen from time to time. Again, everything is done in the most loving way possible. I believe I can best answer that question by a personal illustration. I was discipling a young man and he was very much on fire for the Lord. There are two things that are potential down falls for young men that are on fire for the Lord. Women and work. Low and behold he got a girlfriend and his work demanded more hours. Instead of working with me to come up with a schedule that we could maintain he gave every reason under the sun why he believed this is what God wanted for his life. So, I politely told him that I loved him and I would always be here for him but at this time it just seemed as if he didn't have time to keep the commitments that we agreed upon at the beginning of our relationship and that for now the best thing for us to do would be to let's break and reevaluate his discipleship at another time. He agreed and I started disciplining someone else. He has yet to return to faithfulness. But I have not lost contact and will maintain a friendship with him but not a discipleship relationship.

#### **What happens if the person is not faithfully reading and praying?**

- Again, this is a matter of commitment. I do not personally believe that a person can be disciplined properly if they are not faithful to God. A person can be faithful to meeting and talking with me but that is not my goal because I can't change their life. Only God can do that and He will through a personal relationship with Him. So, if that situation arises, I move forward with grace and go back to the first step I take with all my disciples and that is affirming their commitment to the word of God, prayer, and church attendance. If they can't handle that then I have that loving conversation that I just eluded to with them.

## What is my disciple is not studying their lessons? Faithful to church? Etc?

- Refer to the previous comment. If a person can not stay committed to reading, praying and church attendance without good reason, I don't believe they can truly be disciplined. I am reminded of the young man that Jesus called and the young man's reply was, Luke 9:57-62, "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
- I will say this, we must have grace and know what level of maturity our disciple is at. I do not ask my eight-year-old son to do things that I will ask him to do at 17. He is not there yet. Again, you really need to understand what Kenny and Jay are teaching this week. If the person is a babe in Christ I have to treat him like a babe.
- There is literally a young man in our church now that did not know how to pray until recently. He has been saved for less that a year. He doesn't have much of a church or religious background at all. If I were his discipler I would not have high expectation of him the first month of discipleship. I would take it slow with him.