

The Biblical Philosophy of Discipleship

PURPOSE OF THIS PHASE

I. To establish the fact that there is a biblical pattern for discipling people.

II. To study the biblical pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ working with his disciples.

III. To search our lives to determine how we are progressing in own spiritual walk.

Background: God's Kingdom and Discipleship

I. GOD'S MISSION IS TO ESTABLISH A KINGDOM - Isaiah 9:6-7

- A. God's Kingdom will be fully _____ (v 6)
- B. God's Kingdom will _____ (v 7)
- C. God's Kingdom will never _____ (v 7)
- D. God's _____ will ensure this takes place (v 7)

II. Discipleship is the Heart of (God's) the _____

A. God's Mission is _____

The mission is crystal clear in Matthew 28:18-20 (see I Kings 2:4 – Last words; Matthew 28 = Christ's "last words")

- 1. There is only 1 **imperative** in this passage. One finite verb. One overriding command.
- 2. **“teach”**, to disciple
 - Col. 1:21-29 – Paul's explanation of this mandate/command
 - i. Note: vs 21-evangelism, vs28 – discipleship, vs 28 – maturity

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3. All other verbs are **present participles** (going, baptizing, instructing) and enable this one mandate – to disciple all nations, (all ethnic groups) (any and every one!)
 - We have to go in order to obey the command.
 - Many are good at going but don't have much to say or do once they get there!
 - We are in such a hurry to win the world we'll never do it. We'll never do it because the person we just won we left on the doorstep and Satan stunted their growth so that reproduction did not complete itself.
 - Jesus never focused on the size of his congregation – his vision was the world. So He focused on twelve rough-cut men (like Jewish rednecks). **Discipleship in perfection!**
4. That means that evangelism no more completes the responsibility of the Great Commission than having a baby completes the responsibility of parenting.

KEY: Winning souls is not the fulfillment of the commission – it is just the beginning!

B. God's Mission is _____

1. GOD'S PLAN FOR FULFILLING HIS KINGDOM INVOLVES DISPENSATIONS

- The word *dispensation* comes from the same Greek word which is also translated *steward* in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.
- Throughout history, God deals with humanity and gives various responsibilities to various individuals. There is a definite pattern established by God in his mission to establish His Kingdom, as well as a precise counter plan of attack on the part of Satan 2 Corinthians 2:11 – *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*
- From Genesis to Revelation you see the counterfeiter countering against everything God does.
- Mankind is given a three-fold commission by God in Genesis 1:26-28. God's very first words to man were, " *...be fruitful, multiply, and replenish...*" followed by " *...subdue...*"

That commandment is:

- **Bear fruit;** produce life. (**Evangelism**) Reproduce the life they had received from God.
- **Multiply;** that's fruit that remains. (**Discipleship** *John 15:16*)
- **Replenish;** the entire world. (**World missions**)
- **Subdue it;** have dominion over – The multiplication was to continue until the entire world had been filled with human beings to worship and praise God. That's the difference between soul winning and discipleship.

God has NEVER changed this plan!

1. The Dispensation of Innocence - _____ (**Genesis 1-3**)

- a. Adam and Eve are put in the garden for the purpose of having children and begin the process of populating God's Kingdom.
- b. Before they have children, they sin. 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 1 Timothy 2:12-14

- c. This was crucial, because now their children would not be born with a sinless nature.
- d. God judges man's failure by removing him from the garden. [Genesis 3:23](#)
- e. Satan's device in this dispensation is one of deception.

2. The Dispensation of Conscience - _____ (Genesis 4-8)

- a. Adam and Eve's descendants multiply outside the garden. [Genesis 6:1](#)
- b. However, before they complete this phase, they sin. [Genesis 6:2](#)
- c. This leads to a race of giants being born to them. [Genesis 6:3 - 4](#)
- d. Satan's device in this dispensation is one of corruption. [Genesis 6:11-12](#)
- e. God judges man's failure by sending the flood to destroy the earth. [Genesis 7-8](#)

3. The Dispensation of Human Government - _____ (Genesis 9-11)

- a. Adam's descendants (through Noah) are given the same commission to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish. [Genesis 9:1-2](#)
- b. After several hundred years, they are ready to replenish. [Genesis 10](#)
- c. Once again, sin enters into the picture as they refuse to leave the plain of Shinar. [Genesis 11:1-2](#)
- d. Satan's device in this dispensation is one of rebellion. [Genesis 10:8-10, 11: 4](#)
- e. God once again judges man's sin by confounding the language of the people, forcing them to scatter abroad. [Genesis 11: 7-9](#)

Abraham is given a similar charge by God in [Genesis 12:1-3](#): *I will make of thee a great nation...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* The next three dispensations reflect this.

4. The Dispensation of the _____ (Genesis 12:3, 22:17) - Be Fruitful

- a. Abraham is promised by God to have a seed that compares to the stars of heaven is multitude. [Genesis 15:1-8](#), Isaac - [Genesis 26:4](#), Jacob - [Genesis 28:3](#)
- b. Satan tries to keep the patriarchs from bearing children. [Genesis 11:30, 25:21, 29:31](#), Sarah (mother of Isaac), Rebekah (mother of Jacob) and Rachel (mother of Joseph) were all barren.
- c. Satan's device of deception is implemented again. [Genesis 16:1-3, 27:35, 24:25-26](#)
- d. The house of Jacob is forced to leave the land and go into Egypt. [Genesis 46:1-7](#)

5. The Dispensation of the _____ - Multiply

- a. The sons of Jacob are multiplying, however they do not possess the land, as they are bondmen in Egypt. [Exodus 1: 7](#)
- b. God uses Moses to deliver Israel (Exodus 12) and give them the law. [Exodus 20- Leviticus](#)
- c. God uses Joshua to bring Israel in the land, and then He uses the judges to begin to drive out the enemies and secure the land. [Joshua-Judges](#)
- d. Through the reign of David, God gives Israel a king to bring peace to its borders. I [Kings 4:24](#)
- e. Israel is now ready to build the temple and reach the world for the Lord. [Deuteronomy 12:10,11; I Kings 8:41-43](#)

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- f. Once again Satan uses the corruption of the world to reach Israel. 1 Kings 11:1-8
- g. God judges Israel's failure by sending them into captivity. 2 Kings 17, 24

6. The Dispensation of the _____ - Replenish

- a. God picks up where Israel went off track by setting the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of David. Zechariah 14: 8-9
- b. The temple is built and Israel reaches the world. Ezekiel 43:1-6, Zechariah 14:16 - 19
- c. However, after 1000 years of peace on earth, Satan goes to lead the nations in rebellion against the King. Revelation 20:7-9
- d. God judges man's rebellion one last time. Revelation 20:10-15
- e. God's eternal kingdom is ready to begin. Revelation 21, 22

The church is given its three-fold Commission by the Lord in Matthew 28:18 - 20

7. The Dispensation of Grace - Be Fruitful, Multiply and Replenish

God's original purpose has never changed. The mandate Adam and Noah received physically has been given to the New Testament believer spiritually.

- a. _____ is how the church today is fruitful. Note: Satan attacks with deception. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6
- b. _____ is how the church today multiplies.
- c. _____ is how the church is to replenish the earth.
Note: Today Satan tries to keep people from being sent out of the church. Eventually people leave, but not the way God intended. This results in confusion as people can no longer communicate with one another. As a whole, the church will fail in this mission, and will be judged by God at the judgment seat of Christ.

REMEMBER: GOD'S PLAN FOR FULFILLING HIS KINGDOM INVOLVES DISPENSATIONS

2. GOD'S PLAN ALSO INVOLVES HIS SON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST - Titus 1:2

1. At least two things were accomplished at the first coming of Jesus Christ.

- a. _____ in man of the lost image of God - Colossians 3:10. This was the purpose of his death, burial, and resurrection. Luke 19:10
- b. The _____ of 12 men to take His message to the world - John 4:34, John 17:6-8

2. His first coming was concluded by the commissioning of his disciples.

- a. This "Great Commission" is exactly the same as Adam's commission. (Genesis 1:28) Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:16.
- b. God's plan has never changed. (The consistency of God.)

- The physical kingdom will not be established until the physical King returns to this earth.
- Meanwhile, our mandate is to bear fruit through evangelism to multiply that fruit through discipleship and to reach every creature on earth with the message of the gospel.
- Discipleship is the very heart of God's mission!

C. God's Mission is _____

- The implications of God's mandate are overwhelming, and should consume the total focus of our lives and those in our churches.
- Our mandate is to make disciples of all nations.
- To disciple all nations is nothing short of the same hard work of parenting.

1. Discipleship is NOT an ACTIVITY. It is an _____:

- 2 Corinthians 12:15 *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*
- 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to **prove the sincerity** of your love. ⁹ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*
- John 15:12-13 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*
- Not MOTION but MEANING – Real – Authentic – Genuine -Sacrifice – Giving

2. Discipleship is NOT a PROGRAM. It is a _____ OF MINISTRY.

- 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) ³ Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: ⁴ But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ⁵ In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; ⁶ By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, ⁷ By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; ⁹ As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; ¹⁰ As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*
- John 1:14-17 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. ¹⁶ And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

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- a. Full of GRACE and TRUTH – The HEART BEAT of Jesus Christ
 - Woman at well vs Pharisees
 - Lepers vs the Rich Young Ruler
 - Blind men vs miracle seekers and profit makers
- b. Discipleship isn't a hard covered book it is the "Heart beat" of a believer!

3. Discipleship is NOT a Series of LESSONS. It is a _____!

- Philippians 3:17 *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*
- Colossians 2:6-7 *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: ⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*
- Ephesians 4:1-3 *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
- Ephesians 4:11-16 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*
- John 17:4 *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. (Finish the Life God has given to me)*
- John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (Follow my walk – Love one another)*

- a. Discipleship isn't WORDS, it is a DAILY WALK

4. Discipleship is NOT EDUCATION ONLY....it is _____ and _____

- Philippians 2:3-4 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*
- Romans 14:19 *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*
- Hebrews 3:13 *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

- a. Consider the final word of the Lord before the crucifixion

- John 14:1-4 – promise and care

- John 14: 26-27 – The Comforter
- John 16:33 - These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

b. It is not a DEGREE but a DESIRE (to edify and exhort)

5. Discipleship is NOT JUST TEACHING. It is LIFE _____

- 2 Timothy 2:2 *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*
- Philippians 4:9 *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*
- I Corinthians 4:15-16 *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*
- I Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
 - a. Reproducing your life in someone else
 - Examples of the 12
 - Nicodemus
 - b. It is NOT EXPOSITION but rather EXHIBITION – EXHIBIT CHRIST IN YOU!

6. Discipleship is not a MANUAL. It is a _____, your heart to the heart of another

- 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? ² Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: ³ Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*
- I Corinthians 9:2 *If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*
- I Peter 4:8-11 *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. ⁹ Use hospitality one to another without grudging. ¹⁰ As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*
 - a. We must utilize MINISTRY to build MEN, not MEN to build a MINISTRY
 - b. Ministry = minister = serve, humility, selflessness

7. Discipleship is NOT a RAPID GROWTH FORMULA. It is a LONG LASTING

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- I Thessalonians 2:7-8 *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: ⁸ So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*
- Philippians 2:19-22 *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.*
- John 14:15-18 – The Comforter = a Lasting relationship
 - a. Not a Microwave but a campfire
 - Time to build a small flame, then tend it carefully, add wood, leave it for a while, but then go check on it, put more wood, stir it up a little, re-ignite the flames.

D. Discipleship is the practical process that leads to CONFORMITY to the image of Christ.

Our commission has a single objective: to grow into the image of the Lord. It has to do with our standing vs. our state and making our state on earth match our standing in Christ.

a. **The mandate** is clear: to disciple all nations. But what is the meaning of this mandate? The answer is found in a study of the word, disciple.

b. **The meaning:**

- Mathetes: the word for a learner; to become a pupil or enroll as a student
- A disciple is someone coming to Jesus to learn from him

c. **Its significance:**

- Some form of the word found over 230 times in the Gospels.
- Some form found over 25 times in Acts.
- The word is found NOT ONCE in the epistles – too glaring to be a mere coincidence
- Instead, “disciple” is replaced by another word in the epistles – “saint,” found 57 times
- A disciple is one who learns, whereas a saint one who is set apart, holy or sanctified

d. **The lesson:** One is a disciple in order to learn how to live like the saint he has been made in Christ Jesus. So the objective of discipleship is to grow into the image of Christ.

e. **Its implications:** Discipleship is a process that can be measured by four key indicators

These three goals are what separate us from being a discipleship “program” and being curriculum driven.

1. To establish the believer in the WORSHIP of God through a daily relationship with God through prayer and the Bible.
2. To establish the believer in the WORD of God by building a relationship that goes beyond a Bible study.

3.To establish the believer in the WORK of the Lord as a participant and not a spectator (attempting and not just attending), investing his or her spiritual gifts in the ministry of the local church.

CONCLUSION: One becomes a disciple to learn how to live like the “saint” that he is. Therefore...

E. Discipleship is a process that has both a beginning and an ending. (Do not expect saints if you do not disciple.)

- a. This is another reason why discipleship cannot be a mere Bible study course.
 - 1.The characteristic of our age – 2 Timothy 3:7, is to go from one conference, seminar and study to another. 2 Timothy 3:7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - 2.We have many “pastors of programs”, not many “pastors of people”
 - 3.And because we do not live 2 Timothy 2:2, we are overworked and ineffective. We gauge success in attendance and tithes instead of ministry and mission.
 - 4.How does one proceed from conversion to living like a saint in your church? Can you measure the process? Can you tell me when it has begun and ended?
 - 5.This is of vital importance if we believe that ministry centers on discipleship and discipleship is the heart of God’s mission.
 - 6.Discipleship is hard work, just like raising children. We cannot stop with evangelism and church-building any more than we can just bring babies home from the hospital and forget about them. It is the heart of the mandate and...

III. Discipleship is the Heart of the _____

Discipleship is the measure of our success in this dispensation. By discipleship you can measure the two goals of conformity to Christ and glory to God in three areas: in the church, in the world, and in the individual believer. So let’s talk about how

A. It is the Measure of Success in Churches

B. It is the Measure of Success in Evangelism of the Lost

C. It is the Measure of Success in the Individual Believer’s Life

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