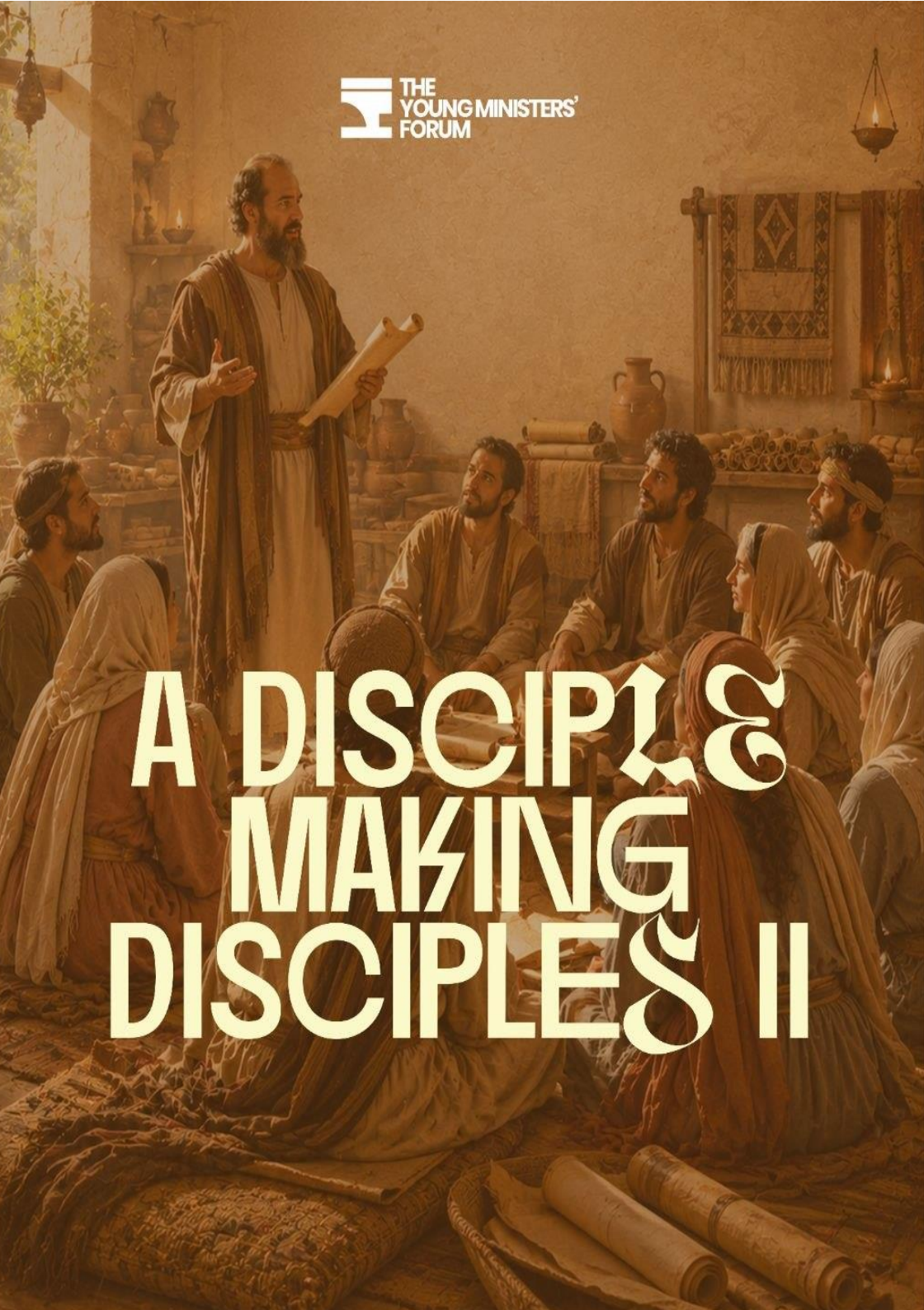




A DISCIPLE MAKING DISCIPLES II

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or
otherwise—
without prior written permission from the publisher, except for
brief quotations in reviews, discussions, or teaching with proper
attribution.

This document is produced as part of the Young Ministers’
Forum initiative to equip and edify ministers for sound
doctrine,
effective ministry, and spiritual growth. The views expressed
align with biblical teachings and the mission of the Forum.

**For permissions, inquiries, or distribution requests,
contact+2348089440040 or send a mail to:
theyoungministersforum@gmail.com**

Scripture quotations are taken from KJV unless otherwise
indicated.

Current Issue: July, 2026

A Disciple Making Disciples II

An Issue Paper

Discipleship After the Ascension

The first part of this study traced the concept of discipleship through the Old Testament and into the earthly ministry of Jesus. We saw the Disciples—taught ones were the remnants who sat under faithful teachers and were taught and formed by the word of God (Isaiah 8:16, 50:4, 54:13) and then we saw that concept reach its clearest expression in Christ. Jesus called men to Himself, brought them into His company, taught them His words, showed them His life, and formed them for participation in His mission.

The question before us now is what became of discipleship after the ascension.

Jesus was no longer bodily present among His disciples as He had been during His earthly ministry. They could no longer follow Him physically through the towns of Galilee, sit beside Him as He taught, or observe His daily life in precisely the same manner. Yet His ascension did not bring discipleship to an end. The mode of His presence changed, but discipleship continued.

The Continuing Presence of Christ by the Spirit

Jesus was no longer going to remain bodily present with His disciples in the same manner as during His earthly ministry. Yet He did not describe His departure as the termination of His presence. He promised that the Father would give them “another Comforter”:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:16–17)

The word translated “another” is the Greek *allos*. It ordinarily refers to another of the same kind or order, in distinction from *heteros*, which may indicate another of a different kind. Jesus therefore does not promise an unrelated or inferior substitute who would begin a different work. He promises “another Comforter”—one who would continue among the disciples the divine presence, his special role is to be a resident Professor—teaching, reminding, helping in obedience. John 14:16 itself uses the phrase *allon paraklēton*, “another Paraclete.”

This distinction should not be pressed as though *allos* and *heteros* can never overlap in Greek usage (We should be careful of what D.A Carson has called root word fallacy). Nevertheless, in this context, it is clear: *The Spirit is personally distinct from Christ, yet He comes in continuity with Christ's own presence and ministry*. One of the passages that reinforces the blessed doctrine of trinity to our hearts.

This is confirmed by what Jesus says immediately afterwards: “*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*” (John 14:18)

Jesus does not merely say, “***The Spirit will come to you.***” He says, “***I will come to you.***” The coming of the Spirit is therefore the mode in which the risen Christ continues His presence with His disciples. The Spirit communicates and mediates the presence of Christ so truly that Jesus can describe the Spirit’s coming as His own coming.

The movement of the passage is therefore deliberate:

- “He dwelleth **with** you”;
- He “shall be **in** you”;
- “I will come to you” (John 14:17–18).

What had been experienced through the external and bodily presence of Christ would now be deepened through the inward and abiding presence of the Spirit.

Jesus further identifies the Spirit's ministry as a continuation of His own teaching:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26). The Spirit does not introduce the disciples into a school independent of Christ. He brings Christ's words to remembrance, unfolds the meaning of His death, burial and resurrection, and continues Christ's instruction within the church.

Jesus makes the same point in John 16: *“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* (John 16:14)

Can you see that the Spirit's ministry is Christocentric? He reveals Christ, glorifies Christ, receive and reveals what belongs to Christ, and forms believers according to Christ or into the image of Christ.

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ in You

Paul makes this relationship especially clear in Romans 8:9–10: *“But ye are not in the flesh, but **in the Spirit**, if so be that the **Spirit of God dwell in you**. Now if any man have not the **Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his. And **if Christ be in you**, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”*

Paul moves through three closely connected expressions:

1. **“The Spirit of God dwell in you.”**

2. **“The Spirit of Christ.”**
3. **“Christ be in you.”**

He does not appear to be describing three unrelated realities. The indwelling Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of Christ, and the presence of the Spirit is then expressed as Christ being in the believer.

This provides a strong biblical basis for saying that Christ dwells in believers by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not Christ in the sense that the personal distinction between the Son and the Spirit disappears. Yet the Spirit so truly communicates the life and presence of Christ that Paul can move from “the Spirit of God dwells in you” to “the Spirit of Christ” and then to “Christ in you.” It’s the trinity reality.

The same reality appears in Colossians:

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

It is also expressed in Galatians:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” (Galatians 2:20)

The disciple’s life is therefore not merely lived in remembrance of a dead sage, or legacy of an absent Master. It is lived from the indwelling presence and communicated life of the risen Christ by the Spirit. This truth must be firmly grasped. Christ is not a dead good teacher; He dwells within His people by His Spirit now. Christian discipleship is therefore not the study of the teachings of a dead teacher or the admiration of a wise man who once lived. It is communion with Christ. It is submission to Christ. It is an

everyday formation by the risen Son of God, who continues to live His life in and through His people.

The Christian does not only believe that Christ **rose**; he believes that Christ **lives**. His resurrection is not simply an event of the past but a present reality. The risen Lord continues His life, His ministry, His presence, and His work in His church. Yet the wonder of the gospel reaches even deeper. Christ not only lives—**He lives in us**. As Paul declares, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Again, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The believer is therefore living evidence of the resurrection of Christ. His life is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit, and His character is being formed within us day by day.

*My soul, never forget these two blessed truths, distinct yet inseparable: **Christ lives, and Christ lives in me.** He is not merely the Christ who rose; He is the Christ who ever lives. He is not merely the Lord in history; He is the Lord who dwells within His people. He is our life. Therefore, Paul can say, **"For to me to live is Christ"** (Phil. 1:21), and again, **"Christ, who is our life"** (Col. 3:4). The essence of discipleship is therefore not merely learning about Christ, but living from Christ, who has indwelt us by His Spirit. Let your inner presence not be in my daily consciousness!*

Discipleship in the Presence of the Risen Christ

The disciples are still taught by Christ because the Spirit brings Christ's word to them. They are still brought into communion with Christ because the Spirit unites them to Him. They are still formed into the likeness of Christ because the Spirit transforms them as they behold His glory:

*“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

They are still empowered for the mission of Christ because the Spirit bears witness to Christ through them: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be **witnesses unto me...**” (Acts 1:8). The Spirit makes us Christ’s Witnesses.

Discipleship after the ascension is therefore not discipleship in the absence of Jesus. It is discipleship in the presence of the risen Jesus, now communicated by the Spirit.

The mode has changed:

- from bodily proximity to spiritual indwelling;
- from Christ’s local presence among the Twelve to His distributed presence throughout His body;
- from hearing His audible voice in Galilee to receiving His word through the Spirit (The Bible and the leadings of the Spirit);
- from observing Christ externally to having His life formed internally.

Yet the essential reality remains: Jesus Christ is still the Teacher, Lord, pattern, life, and goal of discipleship.

The Continuing Mandate of Discipleship

The command to make disciples was given by the risen Christ in anticipation of His ascension: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...*” (Matthew 28:19). The word translated “teach” in the KJV carries the more specific sense of making disciples. The

commission was not merely to communicate religious information, but to bring people under the authority, teaching, and way of Christ. This command was not restricted to the brief period between the resurrection and the ascension. It became the continuing mandate of the church. Jesus joined the command to make disciples with the promise of His abiding presence: *“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Matthew 28:20)

The church therefore makes disciples under the authority of Christ, according to the teaching of Christ, and in the continuing presence of Christ by the Spirit.

This is precisely what we find in Acts. After the ascension, those who believed in Jesus continued to be called disciples:

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied...”
(Acts 6:1)

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26)

The use of the word *disciples* in Acts shows that the discipleship begun by Jesus continued after His ascension. Those who believed the gospel were not merely counted as converts. They entered a community of people learning Christ, following Christ, and being formed under His lordship. The apostles preached the gospel, but they also strengthened disciples, taught them, corrected them, revisited them, appointed leaders among them, and established them in the faith:

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith...” Acts 14:21–22

The expression translated “taught many” in the KJV means that they made many disciples. The preaching of the gospel led people into an ongoing life of discipleship. Apostolic ministry was therefore not complete when people first believed. Those who received the gospel were disciple.

What Is a Disciple?

Before tracing discipleship further through Acts and the Epistles, it is helpful to recall what the New Testament means by a disciple.

A disciple is not merely someone casually associated with a teacher. He is a learner who has come under the instruction, authority, and way of life of another. In relation to Jesus, discipleship means learning under allegiance: receiving His teaching, submitting to His lordship, following His way, and being formed into His likeness.

Three related Greek words help to express this reality.

***Mathētēs*: The Disciple**

The noun *mathētēs* means a learner, pupil, or disciple. It is the usual designation for those who gathered around Jesus and followed Him:

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” (Matthew 5:1)

The word does not describe a casual listener standing in the crowd. A disciple is one who comes under a teacher to learn from him. The disciples of Jesus remained with Him, heard His

teaching, observed His life, received His correction, and participated in His ministry.

Mathēteuō: Making and Becoming Disciples

The related verb *mathēteuō* means to become a disciple or to make someone a disciple. It appears in the Great Commission: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” (Matthew 28:19)

The command is more precisely: make disciples of all nations.

The same word appears elsewhere in the New Testament:

- the scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven — Matthew 13:52;
- Joseph of Arimathaea, who had become a disciple of Jesus — Matthew 27:57;
- Paul and Barnabas making disciples in Derbe — Acts 14:21.

Acts 14:21 is especially important because it shows the command of Matthew 28 being carried forward after the ascension. Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel, and through that proclamation people became disciples.

Manthanō: Learning

The verb *manthanō* means to learn. It belongs to the same lexical family as *mathētēs* and expresses the central activity of a disciple.

Jesus said: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...” (Matthew 11:29)

The disciple is one who learns from Christ. Yet this learning is not merely intellectual. It is not simply the accumulation of information about doctrines, commandments, or religious dos and don'ts. It is the learning of Christ Himself.

This language continues in the Epistles: “But ye have not so learned Christ.” (Ephesians 4:20). Paul does not merely say that the Ephesians learned facts about Christ. He says they learned Christ. He immediately explains this learning as putting off the former manner of life, being renewed in the spirit of the mind, and putting on the new man created after God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:21–24). To learn Christ is therefore to receive His truth in such a manner that the whole life is reordered around Him. It is transformation. How do you know that you've learnt Christ? You're transformed.

New Testament discipleship is learning under allegiance. The disciple learns from Jesus as one who confesses Him as Lord. He does not receive Christ's teaching while retaining final authority over his own life. He forsakes all to follow Him.

This is why Paul joins receiving Christ with walking in Him:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” (Colossians 2:6)

The One received is Christ Jesus the **Lord**. To receive Him is to come under His authority. To continue in Him is to allow His lordship to govern our walk i.e., way of life.

A New Wine and a New Wineskin

The discipleship established by Jesus cannot simply be reduced to the existing systems of discipleship around Him. John had

disciples. The Pharisees had disciples. Moses was also spoken of as having disciples. Yet Jesus did not merely establish another “school” alongside these “schools”. He brought the reality of the kingdom of God and inaugurated the new covenant.

Jesus illustrated this newness through the image of new wine and new wineskins:

“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.” (Matthew 9:17).

The new wine represented a reality that could not simply be contained within old and inadequate structures. In Jesus, the kingdom of God had drawn near. The Messiah had come. The new covenant was being inaugurated. Forgiveness, reconciliation, the gift of the Spirit, and inward transformation were coming into fulfilment.

This new wine required a fitting vessel. The new wineskin would be a new-covenant community formed around Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. Membership in this community would not rest merely upon natural descent or ethnic birth, but upon faith in Christ. This community is the Church. Its defining reality would not be merely external observance, but the transforming work of God within the heart.

The prophets had already anticipated this:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...” (Ezekiel 36:26)

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...” (Ezekiel 36:27)

New-covenant discipleship is therefore not simply the old order with the name of Jesus added to it. It is discipleship within the reality created by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is not merely external conformity to commandments, but inward transformation by the Spirit. It is not merely belonging to Israel by natural birth, but incorporation into Christ through faith. It is not by ritual observance of Sabbath or circumcision but a life renewed and sanctified by God.

The school of Christ discipleship is therefore new, not because it discards everything that came before, but because the realities anticipated in the Old Testament have now come to fulfilment in Christ.

The Continuing Call to Follow Jesus

Although the outward mode of discipleship changed, the essential demand of discipleship did not.

Jesus had said: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

That call did not become irrelevant after the ascension. The church did not move beyond the conditions Jesus gave for following Him. Self-denial, forsaking all, the reality of bearing the cross remain essential to Christian discipleship.

The conditions of discipleship are sometimes forgotten in certain presentations of Christianity. Yet the call to follow Christ still includes the surrender of self-rule, the acceptance of the cross-shaped life where you die to your own desires, ambitions, perspectives and submit to the will of God alone because at the

cross the prayer is “Not my will but thy will”, and total surrender and submission to the lordship of Jesus. The word “follow” may appear less frequently in the Epistles, but its reality remains. Paul called believers to imitate him as he imitated Christ: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*¹ (Corinthians 11:1)

He also called believers to continue walking in the Christ they had received: *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”* (Colossians 2:6)

To walk in Christ, imitate Christ, put off the old man, put on the new man, present the body to God, to mortify the flesh, to yield the body as instrument of righteousness, to put on Christ, to walk in the spirit, to deny ungodliness, to walk in love, and be conformed to the image of the Son are all expressions of the continuing call to follow Jesus.

The language becomes broader, but the reality has not.

Discipleship in the Epistles

The noun *mathētēs* is prominent in the Gospels and Acts, but it does not appear in the New Testament Epistles. This change in vocabulary should not be mistaken for the disappearance of discipleship.

The apostles wrote to communities that had already heard the gospel, responded to Christ, and entered the fellowship of His people. Their concern was therefore not merely to identify believers by the title “disciples,” but to continue their formation into Christ’s likeness.

The Epistles describe the very activities that constitute this continuing discipleship.

Believers are called to:

- **learn Christ** (*manthanō*; Ephesians 4:20; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 2:11);
- **receive apostolic instruction** (*paralambanō*; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:1–3; Colossians 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:1);
- **be taught and teach others** (*didaskō*; Colossians 1:28; 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2);
- **imitate faithful examples** (*mimēomai*; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6);
- **remember what they have received** (*mnēmoneuō*; Ephesians 2:11; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:7);
- **hold fast to the truth** (*katechō*; 1 Corinthians 15:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Hebrews 3:6, 14);
- **stand firm in the faith** (*stēkō*; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:8);
- **walk according to their calling** (*peripateō*; Ephesians 4:1; 5:2, 8, 15; Colossians 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:12);
- **obey the truth they have received** (*hypakouō*; Romans 6:17; Philippians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:8);
- **and be conformed to Christ** (Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:10, 21).

The vocabulary has broadened, but the substance remains. We are still followers and apprentice. The Epistles may therefore be understood as instruments of apostolic discipleship. Each letter addresses believers and churches at particular stages of their formation. The apostles remind them of the gospel they received, correct their errors, shape their conduct, order their communal life, strengthen them in suffering, equip them for ministry, and direct them toward maturity in Christ.

Paul describes this formative ministry clearly:

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Colossians 1:28

The aim was not merely that people should make an initial profession of faith. Apostolic labour continued toward maturity.

The Epistles are therefore discipleship in written form. They continue the teaching ministry of Christ through the authoritative witness of the apostles. The risen Christ, by the Spirit, uses the apostolic word to shape the faith, character, worship, relationships, endurance, and mission of His people.

Grace and the Formation of Disciples

What is the purpose of grace?

Grace is God’s unmerited favour manifested toward us through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By this grace, sinners like us are pardoned. We are released from the penalty of eternal condemnation. We are set free from the judgment we truly deserved.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

We deserved death, but God gave us life—life eternal.

Paul enlarges this glorious truth in Romans 5:

“And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads

to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:16–17)

You need to read this glorious truth until your heart rejoices in the grace of God. Grace surpasses the damage of sin. Sin brought condemnation, but grace brings justification. Sin brought death, but grace gives eternal life. Sin made us guilty before God, but in Christ God has given us the gift of righteousness.

It is not merely that we have been pardoned. It is not merely that we have been released from the debt we owed. We were debtors because of sin. We owed what we could never pay, either in time or in eternity. Yet God, in His grace, paid the debt for us through Christ.

But grace does even more. God does not merely cancel our debt and leave our account empty. He gives us the gift of righteousness. We are not merely free from debt; we have received the riches of His grace. We have been justified, reconciled to God, and brought into His family. We are now sons of God.

Think of a criminal who was once wanted throughout the nation, but whose guilt is not only pardoned: he is then brought into the president's own family and treated as a son. His status has completely changed. Yet even this illustration falls short of what God has done for us. What we have received in Christ is far greater.

This is grace, my friend. It should make us rejoice. These truths must be proclaimed, believed, celebrated, sung, and repeated until they sink deeply into the heart. We must never become so concerned with Christian duty that we cease to rejoice in what Christ has already done for us. GRACE IS GLORIOUS!

We must not move so quickly to what grace demands that we fail to celebrate what grace gives.

Yet we must also not speak so exclusively of the benefits of grace that we never ask what this grace intends to produce in us.

Sometimes we teach one side of grace and neglect the other. Some speak only of duty, discipline, obedience, and sacrifice, until the Christian life begins to sound like a burden placed upon people who must save themselves. Others speak only of pardon, acceptance, blessing, and benefit, until grace appears to have no purpose beyond making the sinner comfortable. Both extremes distort the grace of God.

Grace does not begin with our works. It begins with what God has done for us in Christ. We do not earn forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, adoption, or eternal life. They are gifts of God, freely given to those who believe.

But the grace that freely gives these benefits does not leave the believer where it found him.

The goal of grace is not merely that the sinner should escape condemnation. Grace brings the sinner into union with Christ, places him within the new-covenant community, gives him the Holy Spirit, and forms him into the likeness of the Son. Grace does not merely change our standing before God; it is an

exchange of our lives for Christ's life. This truth should be celebrated until it settles deeply within the heart. Yet this is not the end of grace. It is the beginning of the life of grace.

Many have settled permanently at the doorway. They rejoice that their sins are forgiven, but never move forward into the life for which they were forgiven. They celebrate that Christ died for them, but do not see that He died so that they might henceforth live unto Him. They receive the benefits of grace but do not submit themselves to the formative work of grace.

Paul describes this formative work in Titus: *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."* (Titus 2:11–12)

Notice carefully the language Paul uses. He does not merely say that grace saves; he says that grace teaches.

Paul then tells us **what** grace teaches: *"...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts..."*

The word translated **"denying"** in Titus 2:12 is from *arneomai*, meaning to deny, refuse, renounce, or disown. Paul says that grace trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts. This is closely related to Jesus' call in Luke 9:23: *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* The word translated **"deny"** in Luke 9:23 is *aparneomai*. It is a strengthened form related to *arneomai*, carrying the idea of firmly denying, disowning, or renouncing oneself.

The words belong to the same family of thought in Greek. Jesus calls the disciple to renounce himself; Paul says that grace trains

the believer to renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts. Grace does not remove the self-denial demanded by Christ. Grace makes that life of denial and following possible. Grace empowers.

The relationship between these two passages is deeply significant. The grace of God has not appeared so that discipleship might no longer be necessary. The grace of God has appeared so that discipleship might finally become possible.

Before grace, the sinner is in bondage to himself. He cannot deny the life that governs him because he is enslaved by it. But what Christ now commands, grace enables. The same grace that forgives also liberates us from the dominion of sin. The same grace that justifies also renews our minds. The same grace that adopts us calls us to be bond servants of the Lord, submitted to His lordship.

This is why grace must never be reduced to the idea of unmerited favour alone. Grace is indeed God's unmerited favour toward sinners, but in the New Testament it is also God's active work within us. It is God's own influence upon the heart, producing what we could never produce by ourselves. Grace is God doing in us what we could never do apart from Him. It is **divine enablement**. It is the power of God making the life of Christ a living reality within His people.

This also guards us from reducing the gospel to its benefits while forgetting its purpose.

Indeed, we come to Christ to receive forgiveness of sins. What a glorious truth! "*Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven.*" But these

blessings are not the end of grace; they are the beginning of the life that grace creates. Paul again said in the same chapter:

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14)

Notice the movement of the text. Christ **gave Himself for us** so that He might **purify unto Himself** a people for His own possession.

He redeemed us **from** all iniquity in order that we might belong **to** Him.

Grace, therefore, is not only deliverance from the penalty of sin. It is deliverance from the dominion of self. It is God's work of making us His own people, a people whose lives increasingly express the character of Christ. The "good works" of Titus 2:14 are not merely isolated acts of morality; they are the visible expression of the life of Christ in His redeemed people. We are created unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). The good works comes from God's renewed image that we bear in Christ.

This is why Dietrich Bonhoeffer's warning remains so relevant. He distinguished between what he called **cheap grace** and **costly grace**. Cheap grace rejoices in forgiveness while refusing transformation. It celebrates salvation while resisting discipleship. It wants Christ as Saviour but not as Lord.

Bonhoeffer therefore wrote:

"Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

And again:

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

He does not mean that we earn our salvation by dying. Rather, he reminds us that the grace which freely saves also calls us to leave behind the old life. Christ did not die merely to improve our former way of living. He died to redeem us from it and to make us a people for Himself.

This is the heart of biblical discipleship.

Discipleship is not merely attending classes, completing lessons, or accumulating theological information. No! A man may know much about Christ and yet remain governed by himself. Discipleship is the grace-enabled surrender of the whole person to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is the lifelong work of being conformed to His image until, with Paul, we can truly say:

"For to me to live is Christ..." (Phil. 1:21)

and

"Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death."
(Phil. 1:20)

The purpose of discipleship is therefore not simply that we should know Christ better intellectually, but to know Christ intimately, that Christ should increasingly be seen in us. Grace does not merely bring us to the foot of the cross; grace brings us into the school of Christ. That school isn't western education oriented. It is more. It is a pedagogy that touches the soul and spirit, renews thoughts and intents of the heart. It pierces the students. It breaks. It remould. Until Christ is formed in them. That is the purpose for which the grace of God has appeared.

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”

“Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks’ wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?...

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Dear reader, I hope you've not embraced a cheap grace. I hope your cross is not just a pendant? The response of the disciple is "A cross for a cross". "He bore that cross for me, I will live my life bearing His cross. I want to die living for the glory of God!" Is that your response? Is it still your way? It is still your desires? Is it still your ambitions? What stands between you and the cross? He calls you to bear the cross i.e., death to yourself and living for His glory. Will you renew your commitment to follow Him? Arise and pray!

How did the apostles actually make disciples after the ascension?

The apostles became the first generation of disciple-makers under the risen Christ. They did not invent a new understanding of discipleship. They carried forward the call, demands, cost, purpose, and pattern of discipleship already established by Jesus. They proclaimed Christ, called people to repentance and faith, baptized those who believed, brought them into the community of believers, taught them, modelled the life of Christ before them, and formed them for participation in Christ's mission.

The Apostolic Practice of Discipleship

Then begin with:

1. Discipleship Began with the Proclamation of the Gospel

The apostles did not begin by inviting people into a religious programme. They began by proclaiming a message. The first centre of apostolic disciple-making was the declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This proclamation is commonly described by the word **kerygma**, meaning proclamation or the message publicly announced. The apostolic kerygma concerned both:

- the **person of Christ**—who He is;
- and the **work of Christ**—what He has accomplished through His death, resurrection, exaltation, and lordship.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost follows this pattern. He declares that Jesus of Nazareth was approved by God, crucified according to the divine purpose, raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”
(Acts 2:36)

The gospel was not merely an announcement that certain spiritual benefits were available. It was the proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, that He died and rose again, and that He has been exalted as Lord.

Yet the proclamation also announced the benefits made available through Christ. One of the most prominent apostolic expressions is **the remission of sins**:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38)

Peter later proclaimed concerning Christ: *“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”* (Acts 10:43)

Paul expressed the same benefit through the language of forgiveness and justification:

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”
(Acts 13:38–39)

The apostolic gospel therefore included:

1. **The person of Christ**—Jesus is the promised Christ and Lord.
2. **The work of Christ**—He died, was buried, rose again, and was exalted.
3. **The benefits of His work**—forgiveness, remission of sins, justification, eternal life, the gift of the Spirit, and entrance into the kingdom of God.
4. **The required response**—repentance and faith.

The apostles could not make disciples without first proclaiming Christ. Discipleship begins when the gospel confronts a person with the identity, work, claims, and grace of Jesus Christ.

2. The Apostolic Call to Repentance and Faith

The gospel did not come merely as information to be considered. It came with a call for response.

Jesus Himself had said that: *“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...”*(Luke 24:47)

He also commanded: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...”* (Mark 16:15–16)

The apostolic call therefore included both **repentance** and **faith**.

Peter declared: *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...”* (Acts 3:19)

Paul summarized his ministry as: *“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 20:21 At Athens he declared: *“God...now commandeth all men every where to repent.”* (Acts 17:30)

He later summarized his ministry before Agrippa: *“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”* (Acts 26:20)

Repentance is therefore not merely sorrow for sin or moral improvement. It is a turning back to God through Jesus Christ, producing a life consistent with that turning. Paul preached this to both Jews and Gentiles, showing that repentance was an essential part of the apostolic gospel. These are not identical words, but they describe inseparable aspects of the same response to the gospel.

Repentance is a turning. It is a turning away from sin, Idolatry, false beliefs, misplaced confidence, and every understanding of God and oneself that contradicts the gospel. It is also a turning toward God in Christ.

Faith is the reception of the gospel as true and the entrusting of oneself to the Christ whom the gospel proclaims.

Repentance looks at the former way and says: “I was wrong. My way cannot save me. My sin has separated me from God.” Faith looks to Christ and says: “He is true. His work is sufficient. I receive Him as Lord and trust Him for salvation.”

Repentance and faith must therefore not be separated. Repentance without faith can become mere regret, moral reform, or legalistic self-correction. Faith without repentance can become an empty profession that seeks the benefits of Christ without turning to Christ Himself.

The Holy Spirit is active in this response. Jesus said concerning the Spirit: *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8)

As the gospel is proclaimed, the Spirit exposes the falsehood in which a person has lived. He confronts the sinner’s understanding of sin, righteousness, judgment, God, self, and Christ. Yet the sinner is called to respond—to repent and believe the gospel. This is illustrated powerfully in the parable of the lost son. Jesus says: *“And when he came to himself...”* (Luke 15:17). The son recognized the truth about his condition. He confessed: *“Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight...”* (Luke 15:21)

But repentance did not end with inward recognition. He arose and returned to his father: “And he arose, and came to his father.” (Luke 15:20)

This gives us a living picture of repentance: coming to oneself, acknowledging one’s sin, abandoning the former way, arising, and returning to the Father.

Jesus called this repentance: “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:10)

Faith appears repeatedly throughout Acts. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” (Acts 16:31)

Peter declared in the house of Cornelius: “Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Acts 10:43)

Paul preached: “By him all that believe are justified from all things...” (Acts 13:39)

The author of Hebrews also joins these foundational responses together:

“Repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” (Hebrews 6:1)

The apostolic method of disciple-making therefore began with a clear gospel and a clear call:

Turn from the former life and come to Christ. Believe the message concerning Him, receive the forgiveness He gives, and submit to Him as Lord.

3. Baptism and Entrance into the Discipling Community

Those who received the apostolic message were not left as isolated believers. They were baptized and brought into the visible community in which the lifelong work of discipleship could continue.

Acts 2 provides the clearest pattern: *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)*

Notice the movement:

- the word was proclaimed;
- the word was received;
- those who received it were baptized;
- they were added to the community.

Then Acts immediately tells us what happened within that community:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42).

Baptism: Entrance into the New Life and Community of Christ

Baptism occupies a significant place in the apostolic practice of discipleship. It was not treated as a minor ceremony added sometime after conversion. In the command of Christ and throughout the book of Acts, baptism appears immediately alongside the preaching and reception of the gospel.

Jesus did not explicitly command the apostles to “form churches” in those exact words. He commanded them to make disciples of all nations:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19–20)

The movement of this command is significant. The nations were to be discipled by baptizing those who received the gospel and then teaching them to observe all that Christ had commanded. Baptism therefore appears as a major point of entrance into the life of discipleship.

It is difficult to separate baptism from the formation of a new community. To baptize people into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to bring them under the government of the triune God. They are being separated from their former life and publicly brought into a new order of existence under the lordship of Christ.

Baptism therefore carries the imagery of “initiation”. It marks a person’s entrance into the new-covenant community created by Christ. The baptized person is publicly declaring that he no longer belongs to himself, to his former beliefs, or to the world from which he has been called. He now belongs to Christ and to the people whom Christ has redeemed.

Jesus Himself connected baptism with believing:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16)

Baptism is not what saves. Baptism does not replace faith, nor is it presented as a human work by which salvation is earned.

Rather, it is the divinely appointed expression of faith. A person who has truly believed the gospel desires to identify openly with the Christ in whom he has believed.

This pattern appears repeatedly throughout the book of Acts. The gospel was preached, people believed, and they were baptized. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38)

Luke then records: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)

The movement is clear: they received the word, they were baptized, and they were added to the community of believers. The same pattern appears throughout Acts. Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and those who believed were baptized:

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

The Ethiopian eunuch, after hearing Philip preach Jesus from the Scriptures, immediately asked: “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Paul himself was baptized shortly after his encounter with the risen Christ: “And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” (Acts 9:18)

Cornelius and those in his house were baptized after receiving the gospel and the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Can any man forbid

water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” (Acts 10:47)

Lydia and her household were baptized after the Lord opened her heart to Paul’s message (Acts 16:14–15). The Philippian jailer and his household were baptized after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30–34). The Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). In Acts 19, those who had known only John’s baptism were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus after receiving a fuller understanding of the gospel.

Baptism therefore consistently followed the preaching and reception of the gospel. It was the visible declaration that a person had turned from his former life and had come under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Implication

The Epistles unfold the deeper meaning of this act. Paul writes:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3–4)

Baptism depicts identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The believer confesses that the former life has come under the judgment of the cross and that he has been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. It is a declaration that we now have a new identity, we have died to the life ruled by sin and Satan. Our old man, our connection to Adam in the flesh died with Christ and we have a new life by His resurrection. The reality

of this new identity must be pressed deep in the heart of the believer, pressed beyond the acts of water baptism itself.

It is therefore not merely a declaration that a person has accepted certain doctrines. It is a declaration of a new identity and Inclusion in Christ. In baptism, the believer publicly identifies with Christ without shame. He confesses before the church and the world that Jesus Christ is now his Lord.

Baptism is the public declaration of an invisible work already accomplished by God. The outward immersion in water points to an inward union with Christ. The believer has been joined to Christ in His death and resurrection and has entered the new life created by Him.

Baptism also carries a communal meaning. Paul writes: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The language here points beyond the individual believer. Those who are joined to Christ are also joined to His body. The new life into which baptism points is not meant to be lived in isolation. The baptized believer enters the community in which lifelong discipleship becomes possible.

This is the pattern of Acts 2. Those who received the word were baptized, added to the believers, and then continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Baptism therefore marks both identification with Christ and entrance into the visible fellowship of those who belong to Him.

The Gift and Reception of the Holy Spirit

Alongside remission of sins, the apostles also proclaimed the gift of the Holy Spirit as one of the blessings brought through Christ.

Peter declared on the day of Pentecost:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Acts 2:38–39)

The Holy Spirit is here presented as **the gift** and **the promise**. He is not earned by human merit or spiritual achievement. He is given through the exalted Christ to those whom God calls.

The giving of the Spirit fulfils the expectation of the Old Testament prophets. God had promised that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit upon His people. The gift of the Spirit therefore declares that the new age promised by God has begun through the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit work in the Disciple Before Salvation

The Spirit had already been active in bringing the person to faith. Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment:

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:8)

The conviction that awakens a person to the reality of sin, the righteousness revealed in Christ, and the certainty of divine judgment is itself the work of the Holy Spirit. Before the sinner repents, the Spirit is already working through the proclamation

of the gospel, exposing falsehood, revealing Christ, and drawing the hearer toward faith.

Paul also declares: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

This does not refer merely to the physical pronunciation of the words “Jesus is Lord.” Anyone can repeat a sentence. It refers to the sincere confession of Christ’s lordship arising from genuine faith. When a person truly acknowledges Jesus as Lord, that confession bears witness to the prior activity of the Holy Spirit within him.

Repentance and faith are therefore already evidences of the Spirit’s work. When a person hears the gospel, is convicted concerning Christ, turns from sin, and confesses Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit is not absent from that process. He is the One working through the gospel to bring the person to Christ.

The Work of the Spirit after Salvation

The Spirit does not cease working when the person believes. He continues His ministry within the believer by giving assurance of salvation and bearing witness to the new relationship that has been created through Christ. Paul writes:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:16)

The believer does not merely arrive intellectually at the conclusion that he is a child of God. The Holy Spirit bears an inward witness to the reality of adoption. He assures the believer that he has been received into the family of God.

Paul speaks similarly of the love of God being inwardly communicated by the Spirit:

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:5)

The Spirit brings the love of God from being merely a doctrine heard externally into a reality known within the heart. Through Him, the believer comes to know not only that God loves sinners in a general sense, but that he himself has been embraced by the love revealed in Jesus Christ.

John also connects the believer’s confession of Christ with the inward witness and indwelling presence of God: *“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”* (1 John 4:13–15)

Again, John writes: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself...” (1 John 5:10)

The confession of faith in Jesus Christ is therefore inseparable from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts the sinner before faith, enables the sincere confession of Christ, indwells the person who belongs to Christ, and bears witness within him after he has believed.

New Birth is the Work of the Spirit

This is why Paul can say: *“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”* (Romans 8:9). The New Testament also teaches that the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration. Jesus declared to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5–6)

New birth is therefore the work of the Holy Spirit. A person who turns to Christ and believes the gospel is born of the Spirit. Just as natural birth brings a person into natural life, so the new birth brings the believer into the new life of God. It is therefore impossible to speak of a person as truly born again while denying the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in him.

Paul teaches the same truth in Titus: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* (Titus 3:5)

Salvation is here described as the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not merely added to salvation afterwards. He is active in the saving work itself, bringing the sinner into new life and renewing him according to the mercy of God.

This confirms the unity of the Spirit’s work. He convicts the sinner before faith, enables the sincere confession of Christ, regenerates the person who believes, indwells him, bears witness that he is a child of God, and pours the love of God into his heart.

The later language of receiving, filling, or experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit must not therefore be understood as though the Spirit had previously been absent.

At the same time, in Acts, the Spirit brings believers into a more vivid awareness and active expression of the workings of the

Spirit. His work deepens their assurance, enlarges their devotion, gives liberty and utterance in prayer and worship, equips them through prophecy and other gifts for the edification of the community, and gives them boldness for witness.

There is therefore a danger in creating a dichotomy within the work of the Spirit. The Spirit who regenerates is the same Spirit who assures, fills, empowers, gives utterance, inspires worship, distributes gifts, builds the church, and strengthens believers for mission. These are not the works of two different Spirits, nor are they unrelated stages artificially separated from one another. They are dimensions of the one continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

The experience described in Acts may therefore bring the believer into a deeper consciousness of what the Spirit has already begun within him. The inward confession of Christ becomes bold public declaration. The love of God already poured into the heart becomes praise and worship. The life received in regeneration becomes active service within the community. The conviction concerning Christ becomes courage in witness. The Spirit makes inward realities increasingly manifest.

The language of receiving the Holy Spirit therefore points to more than passive possession. It speaks of the active manifestation of the Spirit's presence in devotion, worship, in serving one another, and mission.

We cannot therefore say that a person who has truly repented, believed the gospel, and confessed Jesus as Lord has no relationship with the Holy Spirit merely because he has not manifested some particular gift. Anyone who belongs to Christ

has the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit has worked in bringing him to faith, and the Spirit dwells within him as the seal and witness of his belonging to Christ.

Yet the book of Acts also speaks repeatedly of people **receiving the Holy Spirit**. The apostles did not merely assume that the Spirit's work should remain an abstract doctrine. They expected believers to know and experience the reality of the promised Spirit.

In Samaria, people believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and were baptized. Yet Peter and John later came and prayed for them:

"That they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:15–17)

Ananias told Paul:

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:17)

In the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit came upon those who heard the gospel while Peter was still preaching:

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." (Acts 10:44)

In Ephesus, Paul asked certain disciples:

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2)

After they were instructed more fully, baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Paul laid his hands upon them:

“The Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” (Acts 19:6)

The circumstances were not identical in every case. Sometimes the Spirit was received through the laying on of hands. In the house of Cornelius, the Spirit fell upon the hearers while Peter was still preaching. In Acts 2, the outpouring came upon the gathered disciples as they waited for the promise of the Father. We should therefore be careful not to force every account into one rigid pattern.

Nevertheless, Luke’s repeated use of the language of **receiving**, **being filled with**, and having the Spirit **fall upon** people should not be ignored. The apostles expected the promised Holy Spirit to become a **vivid** reality in the life of the believer and in the community of faith.

This language of receiving the Spirit also carries the prophetic sense of the outpouring promised beforehand in the Scriptures. It is not merely another way of saying that the Spirit had begun His work in conviction or regeneration. It points to the promised manifestation of the Spirit in the life of the new-covenant people: the Spirit coming upon them, filling them, empowering them, giving them utterance, and bringing into present experience the realities anticipated by the prophets.

On the one hand, no one comes to genuine faith apart from the work of the Spirit, and no one belongs to Christ without the Spirit of Christ. On the other hand, Acts records occasions in which believers received, were filled with, or experienced the

Spirit coming upon them in ways that were recognizable, expressive, and empowering.

The visible manifestations recorded in Acts included speaking in tongues, prophecy, praise, boldness, and the declaration of the wonderful works of God. When the Spirit came upon the household of Cornelius, Peter and those with him:

“Heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.” (Acts 10:46)

At Pentecost, the disciples spoke:

“The wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:11)

The experience of the Spirit was therefore doxological. The Spirit turned the attention of the recipients toward the greatness of God and the glory of Christ. He produced praise, thanksgiving, worship, and the exaltation of God.

The most frequently recorded manifestation accompanying the reception or outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts is inspired utterance, particularly speaking in tongues.

On the day of Pentecost:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)

The speaking was not produced merely by human excitement. Luke specifically says that the Spirit gave them utterance. Their speech became an outward expression of the inward activity and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Those who heard them declared:

“We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”(Acts 2:11)

The utterance was therefore doxological. The Spirit enabled them to proclaim the wonderful works of God. Their experience turned toward praise, worship, and the public magnification of God. In Samaria, Luke does not explicitly state that the believers spoke in tongues. He does, however, record that something observable happened when Peter and John laid hands upon them:

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given...” (Acts 8:18)

Simon saw something that convinced him that the Holy Spirit had been given. Luke does not tell us precisely what he saw, so we should not assert more than the passage states. Nevertheless, the reception of the Spirit was evidently not presented as an entirely invisible or merely theoretical reality.

In the house of Cornelius, the manifestation is stated plainly:

“For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.” (Acts 10:46)

Here again, tongues were joined with the magnifying of God. The Spirit produced an expression of worship and praise. This also provided Peter and the Jewish believers with visible evidence that the Gentiles had received the same gift:

“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Acts 11:17)

Paul's own reception of the Spirit is recorded in Acts 9:

“Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus...hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 9:17)

Acts does not explicitly record Paul speaking in tongues at that moment. Nevertheless, Paul later testified:

“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.” (1 Corinthians 14:18)

Whatever the precise time at which this gift first became manifest in Paul's life, it is clear that speaking in tongues became part of his own spiritual experience.

In Ephesus, the connection appears again:

“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” (Acts 19:6)

The recurring manifestations in Acts are therefore tongues, prophecy, praise, the magnifying of God, and Spirit-given utterance. These manifestations show that the reception of the Spirit was not understood merely as a passive possession. It issued in active expression.

This has led many Christians to expect that the reception or filling of the Spirit should be accompanied by spiritual gifts, particularly tongues, prophecy, praise, and other forms of inspired utterance. There have been considerable debates within the church concerning whether one particular gift must always accompany the reception of the Spirit. The narrative of Acts does

not permit us to construct every detail into an inflexible formula. Not every account records precisely the same manifestation.

Nevertheless, if we allow the narrative of Acts to speak in its own terms, there is a reasonable expectation that the reception and filling of the Spirit will not remain entirely passive or without expression. Acts repeatedly associates the Spirit's coming with utterance, praise, prophecy, boldness, and other visible operations. And that tongues is predominant. We should therefore expect not merely the doctrinal confession that the Spirit has been given, but the active working of the Spirit in and through the believer.

It was also communal. Prophecy and the other manifestations of the Spirit were not given merely for private experience. The Spirit enabled believers to contribute to the worship, strengthening, consolation, and edification of the church. The person who received the Spirit was not merely given an individual blessing; he was equipped to become a blessing within the community of God's people.

This is particularly important in understanding the devotional and communal character of tongues and prophecy. In Acts 10, those who spoke in tongues magnified God. In Acts 2, they declared the wonderful works of God. The utterance was directed Godward in praise and worship, but it also became a testimony before the gathered community. The Spirit brought the believer into a deeper participation in the worship of God and also equipped him to contribute to the spiritual life of the people of God.

The experience was also missional. Jesus had promised:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...” (Acts 1:8)

When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke the word of God with boldness:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)

This boldness was not merely natural confidence. It arose from a deeper persuasion concerning Christ and from the empowering presence of the Spirit. The Spirit gave them freedom of speech, courage before opposition, and power to bear witness to the risen Lord.

This helps us understand why some, including Martyn Lloyd-Jones, have connected the reception or baptism of the Spirit with a profound assurance of faith. The Spirit bears witness to the reality of Christ and to the believer’s participation in Him. He produces joy, liberty, confidence, and boldness.

We see something of this joy in the Ethiopian eunuch. After he had heard the gospel and been baptized, Luke tells us:

“He went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:39)

The language of rejoicing suggests more than the completion of an outward ceremony. The man had received the message of Christ, publicly identified with Him, and now departed with the joy and assurance of the new life into which he had entered.

The apostles did not treat the Holy Spirit merely as a doctrine to be affirmed. They expected believers to receive, know, experience, and express the reality of His presence. They prayed

for people, laid hands upon them, and expected the Spirit to produce worship, assurance, gifts, boldness, and participation in the life and mission of the church.

The reception of the Holy Spirit may therefore be understood within the wider work of discipleship. The Spirit brings the believer into a deeper participation in the life of Christ. He gives assurance concerning the gospel, awakens worship, equips the believer to serve the community, distributes gifts for the edification of the body, and empowers the church for witness.

The believer is therefore not merely initiated into the name of Christ through baptism. He is brought into the living experience of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Baptism publicly identifies him with the death and resurrection of Christ; the Spirit communicates the life, presence, gifts, and power of the risen Christ within him.

The Experience and Receiving of the Holy Spirit

Three things must be quickly applied here.

First, every believer must come into a real experience of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not merely a doctrine to affirm but a reality to be experienced. After hearing and receiving the gospel, believers must be brought into the experience of the Spirit's presence and work, with the expectation created by the apostolic witness recorded in Scripture. The experience of the Spirit is not presented as an unreachable reality reserved for a select few, but as part of the inheritance of those who believe.

Second, those who minister the gospel must not stop at bringing people to faith in Christ; they must also help believers enter into

the reality of the Holy Spirit. The question then becomes: **How do we receive the Holy Spirit?**

The New Testament presents the Holy Spirit fundamentally as **God's gift, received through faith**. Paul asks the Galatians, "*Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Gal. 3:2), and again speaks of "*the promise of the Spirit through faith*" (Gal. 3:14). The Spirit is therefore not earned by human effort or spiritual achievement. He is received because God has promised and given Him.

Believers should therefore be taught to trust God's promise, yield themselves to Him, and receive in faith what He has given. They should be encouraged to ask the Father, who gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13), and to respond to God with faith and surrender. In Acts, prayer and the laying on of hands sometimes accompanied believers receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14–17; 9:17; 19:6). Those ministering to others may therefore pray with them and, where appropriate, lay hands upon them as they seek God and respond to Him in faith.

Third, Acts reveals that the experience of the Holy Spirit is ongoing in the life of the believer. The filling of the Spirit was not limited to the day of Pentecost. Peter, who had already been filled at Pentecost, was later "*filled with the Holy Ghost*" when he spoke before the rulers (Acts 4:8). When the believers prayed together, "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*" and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). Stephen was known as "*a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 6:5) and remained "*full of the Holy Ghost*" even in his final moments (Acts 7:55). Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Ananias (Acts 9:17) and is later again described as "*filled with the Holy Ghost*" as he confronted Elymas (Acts 13:9).

The believer should therefore expect an ongoing, living experience of the Holy Spirit, not merely possess correct doctrines concerning Him. The apostolic witness calls us into a continuing life of His presence, filling, guidance, power, and work.

As believers wait upon God and yield themselves to Him, they should also remain expectant concerning the Spirit's activity in their lives. Acts associates the filling and outworking of the Spirit with tongues, bold witness, prophetic utterance, spiritual gifts, divine guidance, and power for service (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 10:44–46; 13:2–4; 19:6).

The purpose, therefore, is not the pursuit of experiences for their own sake. It is that the Holy Spirit may increasingly express the life and work of Christ through the believer. We receive in faith, yield ourselves in obedience, and remain available for the Spirit to work through us according to His will. The Spirit given by the Father is not a distant doctrine but a present divine reality, enabling believers to live and minister as witnesses of Christ.

The Apostolic Discipleship

After receiving the gospel, being baptized, and entering the community of God's people, the believer begins the lifelong work of discipleship. The early church continued in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). These give us a simple picture of how believers were formed.

The Apostles' Doctrine

The apostles' doctrine was the body of teaching received from Christ and further understood through the ministry of the Holy

Spirit. Their writings preserve this apostolic witness and teach the Church how to understand Christ, salvation, holiness, the Spirit, the Church, suffering, mission, and the hope of Christ's return.

The apostles also teach us how to read the Old Testament in the light of Christ. Christian discipleship is therefore grounded in the whole of Scripture, understood through the apostolic witness.

Discipleship Through the Community

The apostles did not leave converts alone after they believed. They gathered them into churches where they were taught, strengthened, corrected, prayed for, and helped toward maturity (Acts 14:21–23).

God gives leaders to equip the saints and build up the body (Eph. 4:11–16), but discipleship is not carried out by leaders alone. Believers also teach, encourage, pray for, restore, bear with, and strengthen one another. Mature Christians become examples that others can follow (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 5:3).

Christian formation therefore happens within the shared life of the body of Christ.

Prayer and Worship: Communion with Christ

Prayer and worship keep believers in active communion with God. The early church prayed together and experienced the Spirit's filling, guidance, boldness, deliverance, and power for ministry (Acts 4:31; 12:5; 13:1–3; 16:25–26).

Prayer is therefore not merely a Christian duty but part of the believer's continuing fellowship with the Father through Christ by the Spirit.

The Breaking of Bread

The early believers continually remembered Christ through the breaking of bread. The Lord's Supper kept the death of Christ before the Church and also expressed the unity of believers as one body (1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:23–26).

Discipleship therefore continually returns believers to the cross, the grace of God, and their shared life in Christ.

Witnessing: Participating in Christ's Mission

The mission of Christ did not belong only to the apostles. Ordinary believers also carried the gospel wherever they went (Acts 8:4; 11:19–21). Philip, Stephen, Ananias, the Thessalonian believers, and many unnamed Christians participated in spreading the word.

Every believer does not have the same ministry, but every believer can participate in Christ's mission through witness, service, prayer, giving, encouragement, and helping others grow.

Discipleship therefore continues as those who have been formed in Christ help to form others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Who Disciples the Disciple?

One of the questions often asked today is, *Who should disciple me?* Should every believer have one particular discipler? Must that

person always be the pastor? Should one seek a mentor outside the local church? How do we know whom to follow?

The New Testament does not give one rigid arrangement that must govern every believer. Instead, it shows several relationships and means through which Christ forms His people. When these are considered together, a clear pattern begins to emerge.

1. Christ Is the Primary Discipler of Every Believer

The first answer is that Christ Himself remains the primary discipler of every Christian. The goal of discipleship is not dependence upon another believer but conformity to Christ. Jesus said, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me”* (Matt. 11:29). Every other discipling relationship exists under this greater relationship.

After His ascension, Christ continues to form His people through His Word and by the Holy Spirit. This is why Scripture remains the final authority in every discipling relationship. Paul tells Timothy that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The Bereans likewise received teaching eagerly while still searching the Scriptures to determine whether what they heard was true (Acts 17:11).

Every believer must therefore learn to know Christ through Scripture, to think biblically, and to obey Him personally. No human teacher can replace this direct responsibility before Christ.

2. The Ordinary Context of Discipleship Is the Local Church

Although Christ is the primary discipler, He ordinarily forms His people within the life of His Church. The first believers *“continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Their growth took place within a community in which truth, worship, prayer, fellowship, correction, and service belonged together.

Discipleship should therefore not be reduced ONLY to a private relationship between two individuals. The believer belongs to a body. Within that body he receives teaching, encouragement, prayer, correction, examples to follow, opportunities to serve, and relationships through which Christian character is formed.

3. Christ Gives Leaders to His Church

Within the Church, Christ gives particular people responsibility for the growth of His people. Paul says that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers *“for the perfecting of the saints...for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph. 4:11–12). Pastors and elders therefore have a particular responsibility to teach the Word, guard sound doctrine, shepherd believers, and model the Christian life.

Their ministry is not merely verbal. Hebrews tells believers to remember those who spoke the Word of God to them and to follow their faith (Heb. 13:7). Peter likewise tells elders to shepherd the flock by *“being ensamples to the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:3). Mature leadership therefore combines teaching with example.

This gives pastors and elders a unique discipling responsibility, but it does not mean that the pastor must personally become the “individual mentor” of every member of the congregation.

4. Christ Also Uses Other Mature Believers

The New Testament shows that Christian formation also takes place through mature believers whose lives and teaching help others grow. Paul’s relationship with Timothy is one of the clearest examples. Timothy was his *“beloved son, and faithful in the Lord,”* whom he sent to Corinth to remind the believers of his *“ways which be in Christ”* (1 Cor. 4:17). He was likewise sent to Thessalonica *“to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith”* (1 Thess. 3:2). Paul later instructed him to entrust what he had received to *“faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2). Such a beautiful discipleship relationship!

Mature believers also form others through the example of their lives. Paul tells the Philippians, *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”* (Phil. 3:17). This is important. Even when Paul himself was absent, there were mature believers within the community whose lives reflected the apostolic pattern and could therefore be marked and followed. They were following the apostles as the apostles followed Christ, and in turn they became examples that others could imitate.

The same pattern became reproductive. The Thessalonians first became *“followers of us, and of the Lord,”* and then themselves became *“ensamples to all that believe”* (1 Thess. 1:6–7). Those who are formed by faithful examples can eventually become examples through whom others are formed.

This is seen elsewhere in the Church. Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos more perfectly in the way of God (Acts 18:26). Older women were to teach younger women (Titus 2:3–5). Spiritual believers were to restore those overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1–2), believers were to admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), and the Church was to grow through “*that which every joint supplieth*” (Eph. 4:16).

Discipleship therefore happens not only through official leaders, but through **mature saints whose doctrine, manner of life, example, correction, encouragement, and care help others learn how to follow Christ.**

5. God Leads Believers Differently

The New Testament does not require every believer to have exactly the same kind of mentoring relationship. Sometimes a particularly close relationship develops through providence. Paul encountered Timothy and deliberately brought him into his ministry (Acts 16:1–3). In another situation, Apollos received needed instruction from Priscilla and Aquila when their paths crossed (Acts 18:24–26).

Some believers may therefore have one person who becomes especially important in their formation. Others may be helped by several mature Christians at different seasons of life. A pastor may contribute one kind of formation, an older believer another, a close Christian friend another, and a teacher or minister yet another.

The important thing is not to force every believer into one model, but to recognize and receive the people God uses to strengthen us in Christ.

6. No Human Mentor Replaces Christ

Every discipling relationship must finally remain under the authority of Christ and Scripture. Paul could say, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1). That qualification is important. Paul did not present himself as the final object of imitation. His life was worth following insofar as it followed Christ.

A healthy discipler therefore does not make another believer increasingly dependent upon himself. He helps that believer become increasingly grounded in Christ, established in Scripture, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, integrated into the life of the Church, and capable of walking faithfully before God.

Any mentoring relationship that begins to displace Scripture, isolate someone from the Church, demand unquestioning loyalty, or make the mentor the believer's ultimate spiritual authority has moved beyond the apostolic pattern.

Conclusion

So, **who disciples the disciple?** Ultimately, Christ does. He forms His people through His Word and by the Holy Spirit, ordinarily within the life of His Church. Within that community He gives pastors and elders to shepherd, mature believers to teach and model the faith, and brothers and sisters who strengthen one another through shared Christian life. The important question is

“Am I receiving the means and relationships Christ has provided for my growth, and am I becoming mature enough to help another believer follow Him?”

Whatever form these relationships take, no human mentor replaces Christ, the authority of Scripture, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, or the life of the local church.

ABOUT THE YOUNG MINISTERS' FORUM

The Young Ministers' Forum (YMF) is a Gospel-centered parachurch movement committed to strengthening and equipping young ministers to faithfully serve God's purpose across churches, communities, and nations.

As a parachurch platform, we exist to complement and support the local church by cultivating ministers who are spiritually grounded, doctrinally sound, missionally active, and formed in Christlike character. Through intentional fellowship, mentorship, resource development, and structured education, we provide an environment where emerging leaders can grow in clarity, conviction, and competence for lifelong ministry.

Our Vision

To strengthen and equip young ministers to serve God's purpose with clarity, conviction, and competence.

Our Mission

We fulfill our mission through the **FORGE** framework:

F – Fellowship

Cultivating authentic community where iron sharpens iron and ministers grow in unity, accountability, and shared purpose.

O – Outreach & Missions

Advancing the Gospel through evangelism, public engagement, and cross-cultural mission initiatives.

R – Resource Building

Developing and distributing biblically faithful and intellectually sound resources to serve ministers and local churches.

G – Grooming & Mentorship

Providing intentional spiritual formation, leadership development, and personal guidance for sustainable ministry impact.

E – Education

Equipping the mind and ministry through structured theological training, practical workshops, and disciplined study.