

A DISCIPLE MAKING DISCIPLES



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A Disciple Making Disciples

An Issue Paper

Introduction

The Young Ministers Forum exists to strengthen and equip young ministers to serve God's purpose in our generation.

We are living in a remarkable time. Many young believers are excited about God, the church, music, drama, media, ministry, and different expressions of service in the Kingdom. In Nigeria and across Africa, we are seeing many young people give themselves publicly to the things of God. We have the livestreams of our meetings viewed by millions all over the world. In Africa there is a rise of young people in the work of God, using their voices, gifts, platforms, and vocations to proclaim Christ.

Yet this is also a trying time.

Many young believers are distracted, shallow, lonely, confused, and unstable after campus life. Some have backslidden. Some are wrestling with habits, doubt, and questions about the faith. Even where there is excitement, there is often little depth. There is much activity, but not always formation; much visibility, but not always Christlikeness; much ministry expression, but not always solid discipleship.

Africa is now being described as a major centre of global Christianity today by Missiologists. Yet the concern remains we have been tagged “a mile wide and an inch deep.” Are we changing? I do think so. We now have conversation on discipleship in mainstream ministries all over the nation.

But discipleship must not be reduced to a trend, a programme, or a narrow church activity. We must return to the Scriptures and ask: What does the Bible mean by discipleship? How did the Old Testament anticipate it? How did Jesus define it? How did the apostles continue it? And what does it mean for young believers and young ministers today?

This booklet is an attempt to trace discipleship through Scripture and apply it to our lives and ministries. It is written to help young ministers think biblically, follow Christ faithfully, and serve God’s purpose with solidity.

For the foundation of true ministry is solid discipleship. A man who is truly disciplined by Jesus will serve Him well.

Discipleship in the Prophetic Witness of Isaiah

*“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among **my disciples.**”— Isaiah 8:16*

The word **“disciple”** is not a dominant word in the Old Testament, but the principle is prevalent all across the books. In the midst of the decadence and disobedience in the time of Prophet Isaiah, there was a prophetic injunction that called for the prophet to preserve the word of the Lord among the people.

But how will this be done?

God often does this through a dedicated community of disciples.

There was a community built by Isaiah. It was a company of a faithful remnant who gathered around the prophet in a discipleship relationship. There, God’s word was studied, God’s voice was heard, His testimonies were chronicled, and His commands obeyed.

These disciples were a core group separated from the crowd. They were students who studied and embodied God’s law and prophetic words in their life and practice. They did this by faithfully

following a master who was a model, or a prophet who was a pattern.

These included the family of the prophet, the sons that God had given him. For Isaiah wrote:

“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.”
— **Isaiah 8:18**

That is the spirit of discipleship. Israel was a crowd, but Isaiah’s sons were separated for signs amidst a compromised population. His children bore symbolic names, such as **Shear-jashub**, meaning “a remnant shall return,” and **Maher-shalal-hash-baz**, which acted as living prophecies to the nation.

They lived a totally different life against the trends and tides of their day.

They were a witness to the people of Israel. Their names were God’s message to a people who had forsaken Him. What a glorious lesson we often miss from Isaiah. Most times we are so enthralled by his epiphany, where he saw God’s blazing glory: **Holy, holy, holy**. Yes, we should be. Other times we are gripped by his great prophecies of the

Messiah with such clarity and fluidity. What a man he was!

But we often miss the point that Isaiah did this in a community.

His children were his first disciples. Let all God's prophets learn from the long-gone prophet whose words still linger. Vision's height, knowledge's depth, and ministry's weight must be felt in your home. Let it not be that your Christian experience ends with you. Build a community where God's word and God's work continue when you are long gone!

A Christian home should be a platform for discipleship. Parents can raise children in a compromising culture like that of Isaiah and nurture them as disciples of Jesus.

We Are Going to Study the Scriptures

When people tell you, "Try out the fortunetellers. Consult the spiritualists. Why not tap into the spirit-world, get in touch with the dead?" Tell them, "No, WE'RE GOING TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES." People who try the other ways get nowhere—a dead end! Frustrated and famished, they try one thing after another. When nothing works out they get angry, cursing first this god and then that

one, Looking this way and that, up, down, and sideways—and seeing nothing, A blank wall, an empty hole. They end up in the dark with nothing. (Isaiah 8:19–22 — MSG)

The commitment of these disciples is first to the Scriptures. Their mantra was: **loyalty to the Lord and His word.**

They made a lifelong covenant to turn away from idolatry to the sufficiency of Scripture for all of life. The heartbeat of discipleship is loyalty to Christ and His word alone.

The disciples say: We will not try other means for satisfaction. We will not try other methods for gratification. We will turn to the Scriptures alone for our full salvation.

Sola Scriptura has always been the song of such faithful followers throughout the ages.

They turned away from the mediums and soothsaying of the day to study and follow God's written word. While the people sought counsel from the dead, the disciples turned to the living word. While the nation wandered in darkness, the disciples gathered around the testimony. While others chased voices, they waited for the voice of God.

The Ultimate Servant as the Model Disciple

*“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a word in season to him
that is weary:*

*he wakeneth morning by morning,
he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.— **Isaiah**
50:4*

The word translated **“learned”** in the KJV carries the idea of one who is taught, trained, instructed — a disciple. The NASB renders the phrase as **“the tongue of disciples,”** and the Berean Standard Bible renders it as **“the tongue of discipleship.”**

*The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of discipleship, to
sustain the weary with a word. He awakens Me morning by
morning; He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. Isaiah
50:4 — Berean Standard Bible*

*The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, So
that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.
He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear
to listen as a disciple. Isaiah 50:4 — New American
Standard Bible*

Disciples are people undergoing a system of structured learning. Biblically, they are men who have been built and schooled under God.

This verse sounds more like the voice of the Son of God. Who models the life of a disciple more than the Messiah? He says, “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of discipleship... He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”

Before the tongue that speaks, there is an ear that listens. God’s speakers are first God’s listeners.

The Messiah is God’s perfect spokesman. In His earthly sojourn, He spoke graciously:

*“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” **Luke 4:22***

His depth of scholarship was challenged by the Pharisees in His earthly sojourn:

*“How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” Jesus answered them, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” **John 7:15–16***

Seminary is good, but discipleship is deeper. God does this work deep in the heart of the people.

A PROPHECY OF DISCIPLESHIP

*“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD;
and great shall be the peace of thy children.”*
— **Isaiah 54:13**

The word translated **“taught”** in Isaiah 54:13 is connected to the same discipleship idea: taught, learned, instructed, disciple. This was a prophecy of the people of God — the disciples of Jesus, including us. Jesus quoted this passage and applied it to his disciples:

“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.”— **John 6:45**

Paul also spoke of the Thessalonians as those who were taught by God:

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”— **1 Thessalonians 4:9**

Discipleship is God’s teaching and training. He wakes the disciple daily and actively teaches him. He opens his eyes and heart to heavenly realities.

The Taught Ones

When we put these three Isaianic texts together, something beautiful begins to emerge.

In **Isaiah 8:16**, the testimony is bound up and the law is sealed among the disciples. In **Isaiah 50:4**, the Servant speaks with the tongue of disciples and listens with the ear of a disciple. In **Isaiah 54:13**, the children of Zion are taught of the LORD.

The word that carries this discipleship idea in these passages is ***limmûd***. It comes from the Hebrew root ***lamad***, which means to learn, to teach, to train, to instruct. A *limmûd* is a taught one, a trained one, one formed by instruction, one schooled under a voice. So a disciple is not merely a fan. He is not merely an admirer. He is not merely one standing at the edge of the crowd.

A disciple is a taught one. He is taught by YHWH. Isaiah 54:14 literally says **limmudei YHWH**, meaning “taught of the LORD” or “taught by the LORD.”

This is the school of discipleship.

And this is where Isaiah carries us into Christ.

For when Jesus stood in the midst of Israel, He did not begin a strange work detached from the prophets. He continued the prophetic promise. He gathered around Himself those who were being taught by God. He called them disciples, but He

also revealed that their coming to Him was not merely their own movement. It was the Father's work in them.

Jesus said: *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."* — **John 6:44**

Then He immediately quoted the promise of Isaiah:

"It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." — **John 6:45**

This is Isaiah 54 entering the ministry of Jesus.

The children taught of the LORD are now the disciples drawn to the Son. They come to Christ because they have heard and learned from the Father. They stay with Jesus because they keep learning and hearing from the Father.

This is the wonder of discipleship: the disciple sits at the feet of Christ, but behind that sitting is the secret drawing of the Father. He listens to the words of Jesus, but behind that listening is the inward instruction of God.

This is what we may call the **theodidactic** foundation of discipleship — being taught by God.

Theology is the study of God, but before theology—man studying God, it is God teaching man. Taught of God in the greek is “didaktoi Theou” i.e., divinely instructed and schooled. Before the mind searches, the ear must be opened.

If theology does not begin here, it becomes vain and leads to pride. The purpose of discipleship is that the ears are opened in obedience. Immediately the Messiah said he was given the ears of the learned the next thing that followed was obedience, obedience to death. Men taught of Christ are always men of the cross.

he made me willing to listen and not rebel or run away. I let them beat my back and pull out my beard. I didn't turn aside when they insulted me and spit in my face. Isaiah 50:5-6

Jesus himself as a disciple obeyed till death.

True theology then begins in discipleship

It begins when a man comes under the Lord. It begins when the ear is awakened. It begins when the heart submits to His Lordship. To enter the school of Christ is to become a taught one. A DISCIPLE. We learn His ways. We learn His words. We learn His mind. We learn His burdens.

We learn His mission. We learn His obedience. We learn His Father. And only such a disciple can truly make disciples.

What God was doing among the remnant in Isaiah is now seen more clearly around Christ. The taught ones become the followers of Jesus. They are brought to the Son by the Father, and in coming to Christ they enter the true school of discipleship.

This does not end with the first disciples. Paul also uses this God-taught language for believers, telling the Thessalonians that they are **“taught by God” (i.e., theodidaktos)** to love one another (**1 Thessalonians 4:9**). So the promise applies both to the early disciples and to the church: those who believe in Christ are a God-taught people.

From here, we must now look into the details of discipleship as revealed in the New Testament.

Defining A Disciple in the N.T World

The New Testament word translated **disciple** is the Greek word ***mathētēs***, which means a learner, a pupil, that is, a student — one under the instruction of a master. It carries the idea of someone who is under a system where he learns actively from a master. The root word is ***manthanō***, which means

to learn. It is used generally for learning or understanding, as when Jesus said, “Go and learn what this means” (**Matthew 9:13**).

A disciple, therefore, is a learner.

He sits under a teacher. And in the New Testament, sitting is often a posture of learning. To sit under Gamaliel is to be a student of Gamaliel. To sit under a teacher is to submit oneself to learn not only the words of the teacher, but also his life, his ways, his mind, and his pattern.

The third word is *mathēteuō*, which means to make disciples, to train disciples, or to bring someone into discipleship. It carries the idea of actively instructing someone until he becomes a disciple.

So, someone who is a disciple of Jesus Christ is someone who has been brought under Christ as Master. He is undergoing training. He is being formed. He is being made. Then over time, the one who is being made a disciple also begins to make disciples. He becomes a Disciple Making Disciples.

- First, there is learning.
- Then, there is the disciple.

- Then, there is disciple-making.

The Language of Discipleship in New Testament

In understanding the New Testament use of the word disciple, we must understand it in the context of how the word was used in their world.

One of the first contexts in which we encounter discipleship in the New Testament is with the disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35). John had disciples, and this immediately tells us that discipleship involved more than simply hearing occasional sermons. These men gathered around John, learned from him, followed his pattern, received his instruction, and submitted themselves to his spiritual authority.

The New Testament gives us glimpses into what these disciples learned from John. For example, John taught his disciples certain spiritual devotions. In Luke 11:1, the disciples said to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” In Matthew 9:14, the disciples of John were also associated with fasting. So part of discipleship

involved learning the spiritual practices and habits of the master.

But they did not only learn practices; they also received John's prophetic witness and message. They heard him proclaim Jesus as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). They heard him exalt Christ, saying that he was not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes (John 1:27). They learned from John who Jesus was.

So the disciples of John imbibed his message, his prophetic burden, his practices, his baptism, and his way of life.

What is striking is that even long after John's death, his disciples and teachings still remained. In Acts 18, Apollos knew only the baptism of John. In Acts 19, Paul encountered disciples who had only received John's baptism. This shows how deeply discipleship formed people. They carried the teaching, culture, practices, and limits of John's ministry even after he was gone.

That is one of the clearest pictures of discipleship: men so formed by a master that his teaching and way continue in them long after his departure.

The Disciples of Moses

The second important context is the idea of the disciples of Moses. When the blind man spoke concerning Jesus, the Pharisees answered him:

“Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples.” John 9:28

What did they mean by being disciples of Moses?

Moses had long been dead. Yet they still considered themselves his disciples because they stood within the tradition, interpretation, and religious system that came through him. They devoted themselves to the Law of Moses, submitted themselves to the Mosaic order, defended his authority, and shaped their entire religious life around his revelation.

So to be a disciple did not merely mean physical proximity to a teacher. It is deeper. This is important because when Jesus called disciples to Himself, we must understand the depth of that call. He was gathering men who would embrace under His life and His teaching.

The disciples of Moses were also called the disciples of Pharisees.

*“And the disciples of John and of **the Pharisees** used **to fast**: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?” — Mark 2:18*

In **Mark 2:18**, the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees were associated with fasting. In **Luke 11:1**, the disciples of Jesus asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” So discipleship included learning the spiritual practices, disciplines, and devotions of the master.

The Pharisees also had their own system of discipleship. Men sat under teachers of the law and learned the law of Moses, the traditions of the fathers, and the interpretation of their school. Paul said he was brought up “at the feet of Gamaliel” and taught according to the strict manner of the law of the fathers (**Acts 22:3**). That is the language of discipleship: sitting, learning, receiving, being formed under a teacher.

So when the Pharisees said, “We are Moses’ disciples” (**John 9:28**), they were not only speaking of Moses as a historical figure. They were speaking

of the whole tradition, interpretation of the Torah by the fathers, and religious system they believed came from Moses.

But this system is weak and adulterated. It was not the one Jesus spoke about. What began as reverence for the law of God had become mixed with the traditions of men. Jesus came, therefore, not merely to join one school among many, but to reveal the fullness of what discipleship was meant to be **taught of YHWH.**

To be a disciple is not ultimately to be taught by the traditions of men, nor merely by the systems of certain persons, but to be taught of the Lord Himself. This is why the disciples of Jesus are the true taught ones.

Followership and Discipleship

The Call of Discipleship

When Jesus called His first disciples, He called them to follow Him:

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”— Matthew 4:19

And the Bible says: “And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”—Matthew 4:20

Later, these same men are called His disciples:

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples...”—Matthew 10:1

When Jesus called Matthew also, the same language was used:

“And he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.”--Matthew 9:9

So the call to discipleship is first a call to followership.

The word “follow” is often the Greek word “akoloutheō”, which means to follow after, to accompany, to go along with someone. In the case of the early disciples, this was both literal and spiritual. To follow Jesus meant that they left what they were doing and began to do what Jesus was doing with. They travelled with Him, stayed with Him, listened to Him, watched Him, and walked the same road with Him.

Discipleship as Imitation of Christ

The call to discipleship is a call to follow Christ, a call to imitate Christ — to live as He lived.

“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6)

In His book *radical disciples*, John Stott mentioned five areas in which we are to imitate him:

1. We are to be like Christ in His humility.

Christ humbled Himself in the incarnation. Though He was in the form of God, He took the form of a servant and became obedient unto death (Philippians 2:5–8). This means the disciple must not live by pride, self-importance, or the pursuit of status. The mind of Christ is the mind of humility.

2. We are to be like Christ in His service.

Jesus washed His disciples’ feet and said: “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

The disciple must not think any service is too low. To follow Christ is to serve as Christ served (John 13:14–15).

3. We are to be like Christ in His love.

“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us...” (Ephesians 5:2). The love of Christ was not mere sentiment. It was sacrificial. The disciple learns to love with the love of the cross (Ephesians 5:2, 25).

4. We are to be like Christ in His endurance.

Christ suffered unjustly and left us an example, that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21–23). The disciple must learn patient endurance, especially in trials, when misunderstood, opposed, or treated unjustly.

5. We are to be like Christ in His mission.

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” (John 17:18)

“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (John 20:21)

The disciple shares in the mission of Christ. As Christ entered our world, we are sent into the world of others with His life, His love, His message, and His burden.

Discipleship is a call to Christlikeness. To be a disciple is to be formed after the pattern of Christ:

His humility, His service, His love, His endurance, and His mission.

The Distinction of the school of Christ

The School of Christ was not first about learning habits or gathering a plethora of information about Christ. It stood apart from all the systems of discipleship in that day. It was not ascetic like the discipleship around John. It was not legalistic like the discipleship of the Pharisees. Jesus was not merely handing over rules and regulations to His disciples. He didn't give them a list of what to do and what not to do.

This was why His disciples often looked strange beside. The disciples of John fasted. The disciples of the Pharisees fasted. But the disciples of Jesus were challenged because they did not fast in the same way. The Pharisees guarded their Sabbath traditions with strictness, but the disciples of Jesus were accused because they did not follow those traditions in the same way.

John's disciples seemed to carry the weight of an ascetic life, withdrawn from ordinary society. The Pharisees lived among the people, but often with a sense of religious hierarchy and spiritual pride. They found identity in their disciplines, their

traditions, their separateness, and their visible nearness to God.

But Jesus came with another kind of school.

His school was not a school of pomp or pride. It was not a school where men found identity in their practices more than in their relationship with God. It was not a school where spiritual discipline became a badge of superiority.

Jesus was forming men whose hearts were toward God. Men under the rule of God. Men who would know the kingdom, live the kingdom, and preach the kingdom.

In His teaching, the first matter was not simply what they must do, but who He Himself was. When the first disciples came to Him, He said, “Come and see” (John 1:39). He wanted them to see. He wanted them to behold. He wanted them to live close enough to Him that His life would become visible to them. And this is what the disciples later testified:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory...” (John 1:14)

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you...”
(1 John 1:3)*

Sometimes we want a shortcut to transformation. We give people forms to conform into but such cannot transform. Discipleship with Jesus is not first the transfer of information. It is a life altering revelation. It is the beholding of a Person. It is watching closely the Lord Jesus. It is seeing His life, His ways, His purity, His compassion, His obedience, His nearness to the Father.

*Oh! Jesus breathes heaven upon earth.
Oh! As he walked through Nazareth... YHWH fills the
air
The air He breathed was the Father;
the life He lived was union with the Father.*

*Oh, to have heard Him on earth
call upon Abba in the secret place of prayer.
Yet I have more than the agony of Gethsemane;
for I hear Him still, risen and seated with the Father
saying, “My Father, and your Father.”*

*What pure delight —
He came not with formula, He came to show us the Father!*

Real discipleship begins here. It begins with a living relationship. It begins with seeing Christ. It begins with being with Christ. It begins with learning Christ. It begins with life before it becomes labour.

The school of Christ was therefore more Jordan-deep than the school of John, It is potent and purer than the school of the Pharisees. It was not mere withdrawal from men, and it was not spiritual pride before men. It was life with God, revealed in Christ, and reproduced in those who followed Him.

The Disciples and The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes show this clearly. Jesus did not begin by saying first, “Do this,” or “Do that.” He began by saying, “Blessed are...” He proclaimed blessedness before He gave commands. He spoke first to what they were becoming under the kingdom of God.

The word “blessed” is also important. Jesus was not first describing a thing to perform, but a state of being. He did not say, “Blessed are those who do poor in spirit.” He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” He did not say, “Blessed are those who act meek for a moment.” He said, “Blessed are the meek.”

So this was not first list of what to do. It is a state of being. It is not first activity. It is identity. The poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers — these are not merely things disciples do; they are the kind of people Christ forms under the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”

“Blessed are they that mourn...”

“Blessed are the meek...”

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...”

“Blessed are the merciful...”

“Blessed are the pure in heart...”

“Blessed are the peacemakers...”

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...” — Matthew 5:3–10

This is important. The kingdom of God is not first about the outward things men do, but about the kind of people God makes. Jesus was not merely giving His disciples activities; He was reshaping

their life from within. He had already said, “Follow me, and **I will make you** fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The emphasis is not only on what they would do, but on what He would make them.

He was reorienting their minds in the sense of the kingdom. He was speaking over them the purposes of God. Like Isaiah saying, “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel” (Isaiah 8:18), Jesus was gathering disciples who would become signs of another kingdom in the midst of the earth.

He poured His own life, mind, and kingdom burden into them. He proclaimed blessedness upon them. Then He said:

“Ye are the salt of the earth...” “Ye are the light of the world...” — Matthew 5:13–14

Again, this is identity before activity. He was telling them who they were in relation to the kingdom of heaven and the world of men. They were of heaven, yet placed on the earth. They were blessed of God, yet sent among men. They were not to conform to the earth, but to shine as light in the earth and preserve as salt in the earth. They were not to withdraw like John the Baptist into the wilderness, they were not to be like the Pharisees who tagged

all as unclean. They were to live a life of radical non conformity yet involved because they are transformed from within.

We are neither to seek to preserve our holiness by escaping from the world nor to sacrifice our holiness by conforming to the world. (John Stott)

Relationship before religion

At some point, the disciples came to Jesus and said:
“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”
— *Luke 11:1*

Discipleship involves learning the practices of the master like prayer. John taught his disciples to pray. The Pharisees also had their visible culture of prayer. But when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He did not begin with performance. He began with relationship.

“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven...” — *Luke 11:2*

That is important. He did not first give them a formula. He brought them into the consciousness of the Father. “Our Father.” This is also what Jesus had already taught in the Sermon on the Mount. He said: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the*

hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.” — Matthew 6:5

The disciples of the Pharisees loved to pray, but their prayer had become a stage. They loved the act, the appearance, the visibility, the reputation. Jesus said, *“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”* But He taught His disciples another way: *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret...” — Matthew 6:6*

This is what it means to be taught of the Lord. It is to be taught THE LORD BY THE LORD!

The Cost of Discipleship

To follow Jesus is costly. It meant the disciples no longer had a life of their own in the ordinary sense. Jesus now determined their journey. He determined where they went, who they met, what they did, what they left behind, and what became important. He determines their daily to do list. They were not merely students reading books; they were men under a Master. Discipleship is submission to authority.

Little wonder Peter said:

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Matthew 19:27

To follow Christ is to forsake all. It is an end to your old way of life, it is a burial of idols and vain pursuits, it is the total self-emptying of life as you think it should be. It is the death of ambition for self-glorification. To forsake means literally “to send forth”. It is to release our hands from clutching on the world and its grip on our souls:

"Father, let me loose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. Open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary, as Christ's was opened. He thought Heaven, yea, equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So let me release my grasp." Jim Elliot

Three Portraits

This can be seen clearly in Luke 9:57–62. The Evangelist gave us three portraits of men who were called or volunteered to be Apprentice of Jesus. The responses of these three men and the words of Jesus reveals something deeper to all who will follow Jesus.

1. The Impulsive Disciple

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” — Luke 9:57

That is the language of discipleship: “I will follow You wherever You go.” Not only when it is convenient. Not only when the road is easy. Not only when the destination is clear. Wherever You go, I will go. To follow is to Follow on. Not to follow is not to follow.

But Jesus answered him: *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Luke 9:58*

He had the right words. But his words were weight nought. I am afraid that sometimes I have the words of a disciple but when Jesus weighs them, do they weigh much? Jesus was showing him the cost of that decision. Jesus doesn’t want fickle emotional commitment, He wanted their allegiance to be intelligent.

“it is not fair to send soldiers into battle without first briefing them on what is to be expected, and that is what Jesus was doing”. Oswald sanders

He knew his heart and so he would not commit himself into the hands of the vibrant enthusiast. Who says “I will go” but will never go. Who sing “I will go all the way” but will never make up their mind. Following Jesus is not a call to pursue ease, comfort, or worldly security. It is not a life arranged around our appetite, our pleasure, our material success, or our own safety. Jesus does not lie to His disciples. He does not invite them with false promises. He tells them plainly that the road of followership is costly.

Jesus was saying to him, What if there is no visible security — will you still go? What if there is poverty — will you go on? What if the going gets tough — will you keep going? When there is no place already planned to lay your head, will you make Me your security? When there is nothing but faith in God, will you keep following?

When Jesus said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58), He was not saying that He never slept anywhere during His earthly ministry. We know that at different points in His journey, He found places to rest. Sometimes he had homes opened to him. Sometimes He slept in a boat in the midst of a storm (Mark 4:38). He was showing that His life and mission were not

built around earthly settlement, comfort, or guaranteed security. As Young ministers, we should be careful here:

“If you want to “do ministry” and you’re seeking for a life of security, ease, comfort, convenience, chocolate... where all is planned out, all provided for, all will be pastimes and rest, get out of that ministry!!!

To follow Jesus is to walk by faith. It is to move from the known to the unknown. Like Abraham, who “obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8), the disciple must learn to follow God without having the whole road explained beforehand.

So the question behind Jesus’ answer is this: Will you trust Me when the road is uncertain? Will My presence be enough when the plan is not clear? Will you keep going when provision is not yet “provided”? Will you follow when the journey is not secured by earthly guarantees, but only by the faithfulness of God?

This also resembles the story of Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth. Both Ruth and Orpah began the journey with Naomi, but Naomi made it plain that she had no secure future to offer them (Ruth 1:11–13). Orpah

turned back, but Ruth clung to Naomi and said, “Whither thou goest, I will go” (Ruth 1:16).

That is one of the tests of discipleship. When security is not guaranteed, when everything is not planned out, when the future is not visibly secured — will you still go on?

There is indeed a cost in loyal discipleship, but there is also assurance of abundant compensation. It is impossible to out-give God. We may lose in material things but never in terms of joy and fulfillment here and eternal bliss hereafter.

Oswald sanders

2. Convenience seeking Disciple

The first man was impulsive. Then Jesus said to another: “Follow me.” *Luke 9:59*

But he answered: “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” *Luke 9:59*

Here the problem is not impulse but reluctance. Jesus called him, but he had a “first.” “Suffer me first.” That phrase reveals priority. To follow Jesus is to make Him first. It is to make the Master’s will, the Master’s purpose, and the Master’s call the governing priority of life. Matthew informs us that the second man was already a follower of Jesus

when he was called (8:21), so it is apparent that he was putting other things before his commitment to Christ.

Jesus answered: *“Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:60*

This does not mean disciples despise family. It means no earthly tie, however important, can take the first place that belongs to Christ. The disciple of Jesus must not be governed by the world of dead priorities. He must be alive and awakened to the kingdom of God.

And this is important: Jesus said, “Go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” The disciple follows Jesus into His message. Jesus preached the kingdom; therefore, the disciple also bears witness to the kingdom. Every disciple of Jesus, whether pastor, prophet, teacher, cook, businessman, student, parent, or worker, is called to bear witness to the kingdom — first by life, and then by words.

To follow Jesus is to understand that the kingdom of God surpasses this present world. We live in the world, but we are not of it. We work here, serve here, speak here, and suffer here, but our life is ordered by another kingdom.

When Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60), He was speaking about priority. He was saying: Make Me primary, not secondary. Jesus taught that discipleship demands supreme allegiance: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters... he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

Jesus was not teaching hatred in the ordinary sense, but preference and priority. The call to discipleship is stronger than family ties, earthly attachments, personal ambitions, and every competing loyalty. Whenever anything struggles to take the place that belongs to Christ in the life of a believer, the disciple must refuse that competition. Christ must remain first.

The man in Luke 9 was reluctant to burn the bridges that would bring him fully into discipleship with Jesus. He wanted to follow, but at a convenient time.

3. Divided Disciple

Then another said: *“Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.”*—
Luke 9:61

Again, the phrase returns: “let me first.” This man also wanted to follow, but with divided allegiance. He wanted to follow Jesus, but still look back. He wanted the road of Christ, but also the approval, consent, and comfort of the life he was leaving.

Jesus answered: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:62

To follow Jesus is to put the hand to the plough. It is work. It is responsibility. It is commitment. But to look back or like it should be rendered more literally “to keep looking back” is to be unfitting. Remember Lot’s wife.

So in these three men, Jesus shows us the cost of followership. The first man is impulsive; Jesus shows him the cost. The second man has an excuse; Jesus shows him the priority of the kingdom. The third man is divided; Jesus shows him the danger of looking back.

A disciple, therefore, is not merely one who admires Jesus. He is one who follows Him. He walks after Him, learns from Him, submits to Him, leaves what must be left, and enters the road of the kingdom.

Oswald Sanders wrote:

“Christ’s reply uncovered the nature of that man’s problem: his heart was back at his home, not with his Master. Jesus saw that soon he would be looking back and then turning back.

There is so much to deflect us from the path of full discipleship. Many, like this man, are willing for a limited commitment; yet there is always a “but” in their following.

Two fine and gifted young people had completed their first term of missionary service and had showed great promise. We had great hopes for them. As they left for furlough, my colleague said to me, “I don’t think we will see them back again.”

I strongly disagreed with him, for I had detected no such indication. I asked him why he had formed that opinion. He replied in three words: “She never unpacked.”

With greater discernment than mine, he had detected signs that her heart had never been weaned from home. They never returned.

Those who insist on putting earthly relationships first are the ones most likely to be deflected. The third disciple was yielding to the backward tug of earthly relationships. Our subtle

adversary is very skilled in playing upon our natural affections.

The tense of the verb our Lord used indicated not a single backward look but a developing habit — “keeps on looking back.” And which of us has not felt that backward pull?

Oswald Sanders noted what John R. W. Stott has this to say about this:

The motto of our generation is, “Safety first.” Many young men are looking for a safe job in which they can feather their nest, secure their future, insure their lives, reduce all risks, and retire on a fat pension.

There is nothing wrong in providing for your future, but this spirit pervades our lives until life becomes soft and padded and all adventure is gone. We are so thickly wrapped in cotton wool that we can neither feel the pain of the world nor hear the Word of God. . . .

Jesus did not remain in the social immunity of heaven, or hide away in the safety of the skies. He entered the zone of danger, risking contamination. . . . How can we make safety our ambition? (John Stott)

A Poem

Kissed Safety Goodbye

*I was safe at the bay,
secured within the harbour.
Alas, I was sent —
sent to sail across the sea.*

*Out upon the waters,
tempting tempests rage
Sinking storms howl;
yet there, amid the roar,
I heard the Saviour say “come”.*

*Here, sages sojourn.
Here, their skin grew thick,
the boy within dies,
and hidden manliness arise.*

*Christ has commissioned me
to perilous places,
through the valley
where arrows of death slay*

*Now, on a mission,
divine errands are run,
even in Euroclydon,
that fierce and stormy wind.*

*But here,
great men do business with the sea.
They harvest treasures unseen,*

*cast their bread upon many waters,
and receive folds in sevens.*

*There I have been called.
There, miracles are born —
miracles forged in the depths of the sea,
where fear grips the heart,
where fiery darts are hurled,
and hidden tears become companions.*

*Here, security is no idol.
diving in raging waves
like Leviathan in the deep —
unthreatened by the echoes of darkness.*

*The voice of God within me thunders
above the voice of many waters.*

*It is a call out of ease,
**There, at the edge of obedience,
we kissed safety goodbye.***

The Cross-Shaped Life: A Discussion Framework

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

1. Deny Yourself

To deny yourself is to say no to self as lord. It is refusing to make your desires, feelings, image, ambition, comfort, or opinion the center of your life.

Discipleship begins when Christ takes the throne of the heart.

Questions:

What controls my decisions more: Christ, comfort, approval, money, platform, or fear?

Where am I still saying, “This is my life,” when Jesus is saying, “Follow Me”?

What part of “self” is strongest in me: self-glory, self-pity, self-preservation, self-promotion, or self-gratification?

2. Take Up Your Cross

The cross means death. To take up the cross is to bring your will, ambition, reputation, and plans to the altar of God.

The disciple no longer asks only, “What do I want to do with my life?” but, “Lord, what do You want to do with my life?” (Romans 12:1; Luke 22:42)

Questions:

What ambition would I struggle to surrender if God asked for it?

Am I willing to obey God even when it reduces my visibility, comfort, or popularity?

What does “not my will, but Yours” look like in my ministry, relationships, career, and private life?

3. Daily

Luke adds “daily.” The cross is not a one-time emotional decision; it is a daily pattern.

A person may begin well and still drift. Demas once laboured with Paul, but later loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). So Christ must remain enthroned daily.

Questions:

What daily habits are quietly weakening my devotion to Christ?

Where am I slowly becoming more shaped by trends, social media, comparison, or applause than by Jesus?

What would it mean to choose the cross today, not just in theory?

4. Follow Me

Jesus does not call us to a road He has not walked. He denied Himself, obeyed the Father, served others, suffered faithfully, and gave His life.

To follow Him is not merely to admire Him, quote Him, preach Him, or post about Him. It is to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6).

Questions:

Do people see Christ in my conduct, or only hear Christ in my words?

Am I building a ministry image, or becoming like Jesus?

What part of Jesus' life am I avoiding: humility, hiddenness, service, holiness, suffering, or mission?

5. Lose Your Life to Find It

Jesus repeats this across the Gospels: whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Christ will find it (Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25).

In John, He connects it to fruitfulness: the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die before it brings forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Questions:

What am I trying so hard to protect that may be keeping me from fruitfulness?

Am I willing to be hidden, broken, corrected, or inconvenienced if that is the path to bearing fruit?

What would I lose if I fully obeyed Christ — and what would I gain that cannot be lost?

Closing Thought

The call to discipleship is not self-improvement. It is self-denial. It is Christ taking the throne, the cross shaping the life, and the disciple following Jesus daily into the fruitful life of the kingdom.

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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.