



The Discipleship Series

*Dennis
Peacocke*



The **DISCIPLESHIP** *Series*

Because only disciples change the world!

**A SERIES ON PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING
BY DENNIS PEACOCKE**

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- Christ the perfect disciple: The way, the truth and the life
- Discipleship: Training as the critical factor
- Discipleship: Avoiding the pitfalls
- Discipleship: Having ears to hear
- Discipleship: Having eyes to see and a learned tongue



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GoStrategic

Founded in 1979 by Dennis Peacocke, GoStrategic is a prophetic ministry committed to training and equipping leaders of every cultural sphere in discipling nations and transforming the world. GoStrategic operates internationally, educating Christians through our online schools—**School of Business Leadership (GoBusiness)**, **School of Strategic Living (GoLife)**, and **School of Kingdom Citizenship (GoCitizen)**—as well as events, networking, and educational products. Our ministry headquarters are based in Santa Rosa, California, with affiliate schools around the world.

GoStrategic equips believers to be leaders in the communities where they live, work, and serve. We specialize in bridging the gap between spiritual truth and the practical implementation of those truths in confronting real-world problems. With over four decades of experience educating, modeling, and connecting like-minded individuals, we have seen firsthand the fruit of Christians applying Biblical principles to the most complex challenges. It is our sincere hope that the services we provide result in thousands of communities transformed as believers step in to rebuild, repair, and restore our world. To learn more, please visit the GoStrategic websites below:

www.gostrategic.org
www.schoolofbusinessleadership.com
www.schoolofstrategicliving.com
www.schoolofkingdomcitizenship.com

A former business owner, Dennis Peacocke is the founder of GoStrategic, a Christian leadership organization dedicated to demonstrating the relevance of Christianity to every area of contemporary life. He has authored four books: *On the Destiny of Nations*, *Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men*, *Doing Business God's Way*, and *The Emperor Has No Clothes*, as well as recorded numerous audio and video presentations. Dennis and his wife, Jan, reside in Santa Rosa, California. They have three adult children and twelve grandchildren.



A Word of Welcome

*Why does the New Testament use the word "disciple" 269 times
and the word "Christian" only 3 times?*

Why are we told by Christ to make "disciples" of the nations?

Is your Christianity the life of a true disciple?

Welcome as we learn what it takes to become a true follower of Jesus Christ. It is my conviction that "Christians" are not much of a threat to Satan and the standards of this world. A true disciple, on the other hand, is not only a threat, but a key to bringing glory to the Father, implementing His standards in this fallen world, and exemplifying the life of Christ.

This Discipleship Series is specifically designed to give you practical tools to apply on a daily basis that will help you become a true disciple. It will also help you train family, friends, and those you care about to truly make a difference for His Kingdom.

May the Holy Spirit be present as we seek to learn and practice becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

In Him,



Dennis T. Peacocke

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LESSON 1

Following Christ Into His Way, His Truth, and His Life, Part I

I. Understanding the goals of this series:

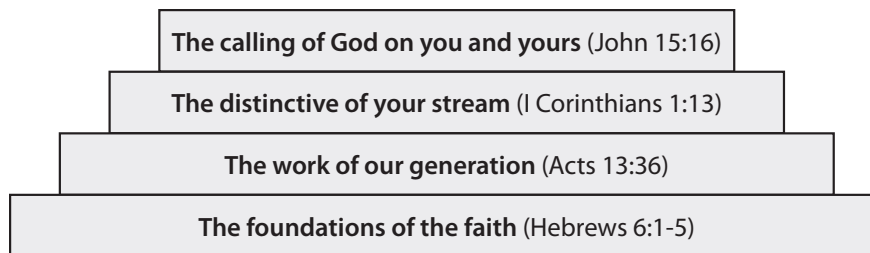
- A. Our first goal is to understand the nature of a disciple and to commit ourselves to becoming one.
 - 1. Because He modeled a life of discipleship to the Father, so must we.
 - 2. Only disciples change the world.
- B. Our second goal is to begin to understand and commit ourselves to practice the life-style of a disciple.
 - 1. To be in daily training.
 - 2. Not to believe we can “make ourselves” (pride + fear + isolation).
 - 3. The end goal is to have a Christ-pleasing life worth imparting.
 - a. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

II. Christ has commissioned us to change people and nations. (Matthew 28:18-20)

- A. Only disciples are used by God to change the world through their faith.
 - 1. Definition: A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Jesus Christ, one in training daily to obey Him and live by the power of His Spirit.
 - 2. Jesus defines disciples as those living to obey His commandments. (John 15:10,14)
 - 3. He gives many examples of what disciples are and do, found in both the Old Testament (Hebrews 11) and the New (Luke 14:26-35). Luke 14:26-35, for example, lists five particular attributes of disciples:
 - a. Their relational priorities in order (Luke 14:26).
 - b. They embrace personal responsibility and suffering (Luke 14:27).
 - c. They practice strategic living (Luke 14:28-30).
 - d. They wage wise spiritual warfare (Luke 14:31-32).
 - e. Their total resources are available to Christ (Luke 14:33).
 - 4. Believers go to heaven; disciples reveal a portion of heaven here on earth.
- B. Disciples are workers (Matthew 9:35-38), believers who are committed to letting Christ do His ongoing ministry to the world through them:
 - 1. Bringing salvation to fallen individuals.
 - 2. Bringing redemption to God-ordained institutions.
 - 3. Taking spiritual authority over rebellious spirits and strongholds.

- C. Disciples are daily working to have a clear historical context for their work and calling:
1. The word of God
 2. Faith and prayer
 3. Incarnation
 4. The nature of Law and Grace
 5. Water & Spirit baptism (cross)
 6. The Fear of the Lord
 7. Revelation and testing
 8. The Priesthood of the believer
 9. Spiritual authority
 10. Spiritual warfare
 11. The Kingdom and the Church
 12. Love for the truth (destiny, militancy, service, family)

Diagram One: The Context of Our Work



- D. To change the world we begin by changing ourselves: we build inside to outside, small to large, natural to spiritual, bottom to top (John 3:3-5; Luke 16:10-12).

III. What is a Disciple?

- A. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Jesus Christ, one in training daily to obey Him and to live by the power of His Spirit.
1. Disciples have a Master.
 2. Disciples copy their Master's life (I Corinthians 11:1).
- B. Jesus clearly defines what we are to follow:
1. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me."
 2. The prize is the Father and we get there by following Christ.

Diagram Two: The Three Essentials of Christ's Life

THE WAY	THE TRUTH	THE LIFE
FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LORD	OPERATING THROUGH A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW	LIVING IN A GODLY LIFESTYLE (PSALM 90)
<p>1. Spiritual discipline</p> <p>a. Imitating the way Christ acted in the Scriptures and how your discipler (others) acts.</p> <p>b. This requires study, a workout plan, and a place of accountability.</p> <p>2. Learning to see and study away (Psalms 25:8-9; 27:11) requires:</p> <p>a. Webster: "A regular course, a means to an end, a determined course or methodology.</p> <p>b. We must understand the East-West cultural difference between individualistic instruction (West) and being made or coached by another (East).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 22:4 • Examples: Judo, Aikido, Karate-do • Elisha-Elijah; Eli-Samuel; Moses-Joshua; Jesus-the twelve 	<p>1. Mental discipline</p> <p>a. Training your mind to understand reality from a wholistic and biblical point of view</p> <p>b. This requires study, a work-out plan, and a place of accountability.</p> <p>2. Study in Christian worldview (John 8:32) requires:</p> <p>a. A recognition of man's fallenness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That deception is our normal point of view. • That scripture must train our minds to see reality. • That the world-system is in conspiracy to keep our minds in bondage (II Corinthians 10:3-5) <p>b. We must study presuppositional thinking (Romans 12:2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mind justifies what the heart has chosen (Romans 1:18-22) • We must discover our specialty areas and develop them. 	<p>1. Living within your design.</p> <p>a. Understanding and practicing the life of cycles, sabbaths, design and limitations.</p> <p>b. This requires study, a work-out plan, and a place of accountability.</p> <p>2. Study in how to live a quiet and peaceful life (1 Timothy 2:2) requires:</p> <p>a. A clear recognition of the satanic desire to ascend out of our human realm up into the divine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is apart from the creation and a partaker of the divine only in Christ. • Being fully man is what redemption is all about. <p>b. We must study the created order and train ourselves to live within it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycles & seasons (7 days, 7 years, 50 years, 4 seasons, etc.) • Limits & spheres: ministry, meditation, relationships, priorities and focus, generational transfer.

LESSON 2

Following Christ Into His Way, His Truth, and His Life, Part II

I. Lesson Review

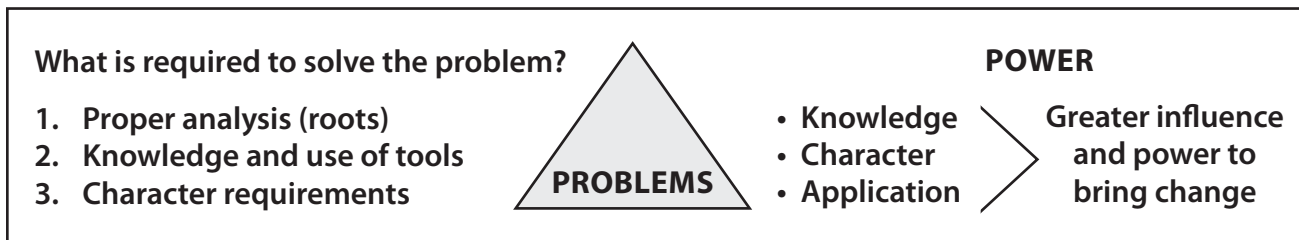
- A. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Christ, daily in training to life in the Spirit.
- B. Believers go to heaven; disciples reveal a measure of heaven here on earth.
- C. Disciples are following Christ into His ways, His truths and His life-style.

II. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower committed to training as a way of life.

- A. Let us firstly deal with some misconceptions about what a disciple is or is not.
 - 1. You are not a disciple just because you have a pastor or disciples.
 - 2. You are not a disciple simply because you memorize bible verses.
 - 3. You are not a disciple simply because you say you are.
- B. Let us lay out some of the basic philosophy of living which real disciples live by. (A dozen key attributes).
 - 1. They understand and practice the daily use of "use it or lose it." (Hebrews 5:14; I Corinthians 9:25-27; Matthew 7:23; Hebrews 12:11; Philippians 4:9; Colossians 2:5; I Peter 2:10; I John 1:6, 3:10; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 6:20-23.)
 - 2. The key words in Proverbs, *wisdom* and *instruction* (Proverbs 1:2), literally mean *skill* and *discipline*.
 - 3. They understand that growth comes from risk and pressure; "*no pain-no gain*."
 - 4. They understand that *responsibility produces ownership*.
 - 5. They understand the seeking alternative balance between *peace and passion*.
 - 6. They understand that the fastest way to learn is to teach. Disciples are investors in people.
 - 7. Like Jesus, they are believers under authority (Luke 7:8-10).
 - 8. They live to be, "hired by the Lord." (Matthew 20:1-15)

9. They understand that you impart and receive what someone is, not what they say they are (measles vs. mumps).
10. They understand the necessity of building their lives in harmony; body, soul and spirit.
11. They understand the necessity of living under the control of their spirit in their spiritual identity (Matthew 16:18), i.e.. "Peter" (rock) vs. Simon (wishy-washy).
12. Disciples understand that power is guarded by problems:

Diagram One: "Power Is Guarded By Problems"



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III. Let us examine some of the differences between teaching and training.

**THE
MANY**

A. Teaching is an essential and biblical form of sharing knowledge (I Timothy 3:2, 4:11; Matthew 28:18-20)

1. Teaching primarily is a methodology of verbally communicating concepts, the meaning of words or ideas to the listener, without necessarily requiring the listener to respond while the information is being shared.
2. The usage of the information is then left up to the listener.
3. The methodology primarily uses the mind, the hearing and little to none of the facilities of the body, soul, or spirit.

**SMALL
GROUP**

B. Training is also an essential biblical form of learning, but is significantly different than teaching. (Proverbs 22:6 example: the Hebrew-Chaldee word origin is "Chanak" and means to narrow or restrict.)

1. "Teaching" is more frequently associated with the Western mode of instruction.
2. The following diagram should be helpful:

Diagram Two: "Training Contrasted With Teaching"

"TEACHING"		vs.	"TRAINING"	
LEVEL 1:	1 → Talk 2 → Listen 3 → Personally think through	vs.	1 → Talk 2 → Listen 3 → Demonstrate 4 → Watch 5 → You do it (wrestle with it) 6 → Trainer corrects	
LEVEL 2:	1 → Think 2 → Wrestle with or lose it	vs.	1 → Think 2 → Watch 3 → Do 4 → Adjust 5 → Do 6 → Think about 7 → Practice	
LEVEL 3:	1 → Think about	vs.	1 → Practice until concept is an action and the action is a reflex (character)	
LEVEL 4:	Teaching requires listening skills and self-teaching to apply	vs.	Training involves coaching to see and alter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstanding • Misapplication Identifies tendencies and patterns of strength and weakness out of which comes a workout plan to build on!	
LEVEL 5:	Information	vs.	Incarnation	

LESSON 3

Understanding the Obstacles to Discipleship

I. Lesson Review

- A. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Christ, daily in training to life in the Spirit.
- B. Believers go to heaven; disciples reveal a measure of heaven here on earth.
- C. Disciples are following Christ into His ways, His truths and His life-style.
- D. Disciples live out and seek out training and the use and correction of their truths.
- E. Disciples know that power (service to Christ) is guarded by problems.
- F. Disciples utilize and understand the differences between teaching and training.

II. Let us examine some of the major obstacles to discipleship

- A. Effective training reveals how we see, hear, speak and respond under evaluation.
 - 1. Listening is passive in the untrained listener. Note-taking reveals at least a primary commitment to usage.
 - 2. Obstacles are revealed when training is required.
- B. Let us examine some of the obstacles in the following diagram (see next page).

Diagram One: Obstacles to Discipleship

IN THE DISCIPLER	IN THE DISCIPLE	IN THE CHURCH	IN THE CULTURE
1. "Religion" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching w/o training knowledge w/o incarnation 	1. "Religion" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wants form, not change thinks knowing is being 	1. "Religion" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wants appearance (numbers; money) 	1. Illusion vs. substance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greek vs. Hebrew
2. Insecurity: fear of being challenged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ignorance of how to justify or demonstrate 	2. Fear of evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correction vs. rejection focus on technique rebellion fear of changing old habits (identity) 	2. Antinomianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> misuse of Matt. 7:1-5 "judge not" the law reveals the need for grace (change) 	2. Hate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ridicule, rejection, condemnation
3. Creating dependency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building our own kingdom vs. releasing sons 	3. Fear of responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unwillingness to stand alone unbelief in their techniques defense must precede offense or you'll be afraid to fight or declare a result! 	3. Religious isolation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by building for the church, not the kingdom 	3. Welfarism and tyranny of the state <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimization of risk so as to create dependency and lessen the consequences of sin.

I. Techniques are not mastered without a constant practice of basics

- A. New or more complex truth is build on old, basic, proven truths (Matthew 13:52).
1. Excellence is built on the "cantilever principle."
 2. Deception is to leave your roots or bases for anything!
 3. The best way (style) is the one you know (assuming it is God).
- B. Basic work-out routines for disciples should include:
1. A constant review of essential biblical truths and how to use their major application in your life (see lesson #1, diagram one).
 2. A recognition that spiritual change (offense) is built on knowing how to block sin (defense). What is still mastering you? (Genesis 4:7)
 3. My "work-out" involves the above plus ("Hurts of Life"):
 - a. Daily prayer and studying the word
 - b. A daily application of the principles of:
 - The sovereign choices of God
 - c. The laws of sowing and reaping
 - Staying clear from bitterness
 - Exercising judgment
 - Properly responding to spiritual authority
 - d. Seeking to walk as a warrior and a worshipper

We stand before
man as we stand
before God

LESSON 4

The Tools of the Disciple: Learning to Hear

Matthew 13:11-23
Isaiah 11:1-3; 50:4-5

I. Lesson Review:

- A. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Christ, daily in training to life in the Spirit.
- B. Believers go to heaven; disciples reveal a measure of heaven here on earth.
- C. Disciples are following Christ into His ways, His truths and His life-style.
- D. Disciples live out and seek out training and the use and correction of their truths.
- E. Disciples know that power (service to Christ) is guarded by problems.
- F. Disciples utilize and understand the differences between teaching and training.
- G. Training, more than simply teaching, reveals where people are really at.
- H. Disciples train off their basics as they move into new things.

II. The tools of the disciple: Learning how to hear: (Isaiah 50:4-5)

- A. Here are the major obstacles that keep us from being able to hear:
 - 1. By moving so fast that the “traffic” of our activity keeps our “spiritual ears” plugged (Matthew 13:22).
 - a. The issue of a demonic culture that demands constant excitation and noise so as to keep us from slowing down to truly hear, and ask the right questions. (Critical need for Sabbaths!)
 - b. Speed destroys the ability to even ask the right questions (Isaiah 40:31).
 - c. Elijah learned the ability to hear by listening for the still, small voice (I Kings 19:12) more than the excitement of the storm.
 - 2. By listening without any active commitment to *apply* what you’re hearing so that you don’t wrestle with it and therefore quickly forget it (James 1:22-24).

- a. We must use it or lose it.
 - b. Practice makes permanent.
 - c. Unapplied truth undermines and destroys the strength of the truth you already have (Mt 13:12) because of the law of spiritual prosperity. We must value the word of the Lord!
3. By listening with an untrained wandering mind instead of seeking God for the grace of a listening ear (Isaiah 50:4). Listening requires a daily routine, "morning by morning."
4. By listening to the wrong people, that is, not knowing who to listen to and who not to listen to.
- a. My example of "rabbit ears."
 - b. We listen to those we know by experience and revelation and are our counselors (root structures).
 - c. We listen to those who can demonstrate the truth of what they are saying and can show that it works rather than it being merely theory.
 - d. This brings into play the whole issue of God being a systematic builder (Isa 28:9-10) and the necessity of not running around the "spiritual gym" giving ourselves hernias because we're listening to Satan's work-out routine for us! (teaching reference: "No More Spiritual Hernias")
- B. Let us now examine some of the positive characteristics of hearing:
- 1. We have learned to hear God's word against ourselves.
 - a. We listen with an unprotected heart when the Spirit says it's Him.
 - b. We confirm our need for openness through trusted, related council (roots).
 - c. We recognize that fear of change, habits, and the lack of willingness to "restock our shelves" operates in us as an obstacle to our hearing God. "I was not disobedient." (Isa 50:5)
 - 2. We have learned not to reject either the message or the messenger because what they say isn't what we want to hear or it was said in a way we may not want to hear.
 - 3. We have learned, as good Bereans, to check what we hear against God's word (Acts 17:16-11).
 - 4. We have kept a written record of what has proven to have been said to us by God in the past, and we measure new words against it as a point of consistency and alignment.
 - 5. We listen for God's word to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three reliable witnesses (Deut 17:6; 1 Jo 5:8).

LESSON 5

The Tools of the Disciple: Learning to Speak and See

I. Lesson Review:

- A. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower and student of Christ, daily in training to life in the Spirit.
- B. Believers go to heaven; disciples reveal a measure of heaven here on earth.
- C. Disciples are following Christ into His ways, His truths and His life-style.
- D. Disciples live out and seek out training and the use and correction of their truths.
- E. Disciples know that power (service to Christ) is guarded by problems.
- F. Disciples utilize and understand the differences between teaching and training.
- G. Training, more than simply teaching, reveals where people are really at.
- H. Disciples train off their basics as they move into new things.
- I. The skill of learning is cultivated by knowledge, practice, and obedience.
- J. Listening involves knowing who to listen to and who not to listen to.
- K. Godly speech involves bringing both our inner and outer conversation under God's control.
- L. Only in the power of the Holy Spirit can we truly see clearly.

II. The tools of the disciple: learning how to speak (Proverbs 18:21)

- A. We must understand that speaking involves both an outer and inner conversation.
 - 1. With our outer conversation we communicate to others.
 - 2. With our inner conversation we communicate to ourselves.
 - 3. We think in word conversations so this issue determines the course of our actions.

Diagram One: How Actions are Built

STIMULUS → OUR INNER CONVERSATION → WILL/EMOTIONS → DECLARATION (OUTER CONVERSATION) → ACTION

B. Let us first examine some of the issues involved with our inner conversation.

1. We think in words and sentences, we feel in emotions.
2. What we think (speak) internally may or may not be aligned with what we are saying in our outer conversation. The bible describes the inner conversation as “thinking in our hearts” (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 5:28, 3:9).
3. Unbelief, duplicity, and confusion are generated by the differences between my inner and outer conversations.
4. The following diagram should be helpful:

Diagram Two: Inner-Outer Conversation Alignment

Jesus, by the Spirit,
tuned into people's
inner conversations

WHAT I SAY TO MYSELF

- Unbelief
- doublemindedness
- “It didn’t work last time”
(James 1:6-8)
- Duplicitousness
- “With a brick!”
- Confusion
- “I wish I were home”

VS.

WHAT I SAY TO OTHERS

- “I’m healed in Jesus”
- “The Lord bless you”
- “I’m here to serve you”

5. The goal of a disciple is to bring the inner and outer conversation in alignment under God. Friendship or authenticity is measured by that *agreement* and we often sense when someone is not telling us the truth, i.e. what they’re saying on the inside.

6. The “tongue of a disciple” (Isaiah 50:4) begins on the inside and sets the course for the outer tongue and hence the body (James 3:1-12).

C. As we all know, the bible is full of insight and admonitions on how our tongue (outer conversation) controls our lives. Proverbs especially focuses on the “skill and discipline” of using our tongues properly.

1. Our faith is directed by what we say. (Romans 10:10,13,17)
2. As we have already seen, our goals are established by our speaking and made clear by our written speaking (Habakkuk 2:2).

D. Our ability to make and empower covenants (shalom) is built upon clear speaking and the setting of our wills and faith in God’s grace to fulfill the promises we make.

1. Powerful promises are built on alignment of the inner-outer conversation.
2. Promises are built on free agreement to abide by the talked through rules.

III. The tools of the disciple: learning how to see: (Isaiah 11:1-3)

A. Let us first deal with obstacles to our seeing clearly (five major things).

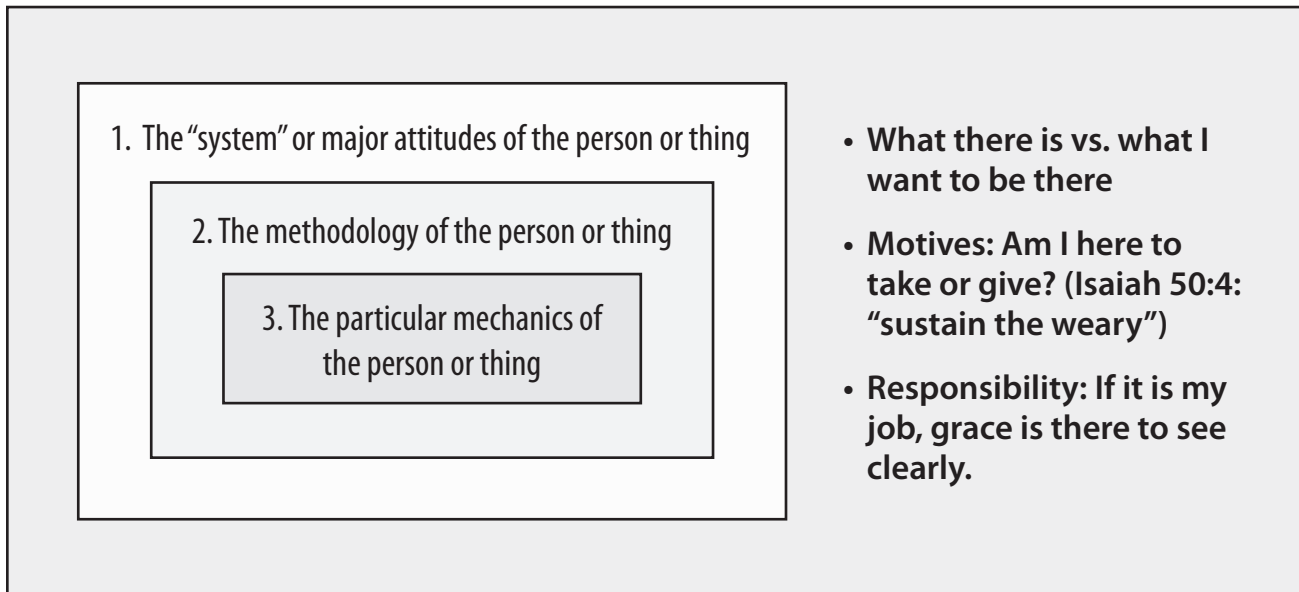
1. Practicing sin obscures our vision.
2. What is inside us largely determines the clarity or obscurity of our vision (see teaching: “Discerning the Fundamental Nature of People and Things”)
 - a. Fear clouds our vision (projection)
 - b. Undue speed or haste clouds our vision (carelessness)
 - c. Personal ambition clouds our vision (unsanctified ambition)
 - d. False expectations cloud our vision (unclarified agreements)
 - e. Wanting things to be the way we want it clouds our vision (idealism)

B. Let us now discuss two vital attributes that allow us to see clearly.

1. We have what is called, “perspective.”
2. There are two principle ways to gain perspective.
 - a. To separate ourselves from the system or things that distract us. Examples: Abraham, Moses, The Prophets, David, John the Baptist, Paul. (Disengagement)

- b. To deeply study what we see against the word of God, and to let the word show us the signs of hidden things. (Proverbs: if you see or hear this, this is what that means).
3. The following diagram should help us:

Diagram Three: Seeing the Big Picture (Perspective)



IV. Conclusions:

1. We have been exposed to these ideas (teaching).
2. If you use them (train with them), you’ll see how they work.
3. Disciples will *train*.

Recommended Reading List: Discipleship

1. **Discipling the Nations**, Richard De Ridder. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975
2. **The Training of the Twelve: Timeless Principles for Leadership Development**, A. Bruce. Kregel Classics, 2nd Edition. March, 2000
3. **The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal**, Howard Snyder. Wipf & Stock Publishing 1996
4. **Disciples are Made Not Born**, Walter A. Henrichsen. Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books
5. **The Master Plan of Evangelism**, Robert E. Coleman. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company
6. **The Cost of Discipleship**, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc.
7. **Dedication and Leadership**, Douglas Hyde. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press
8. **Spiritual Authority**, Watchman Nee. Manassas VA: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc.
9. **The Radical Wesley Reconsidered**, Bangor Christian Trust and Methodism, Bangor Christian Trust Publications
10. **Down to Earth Discipling: Essential Principles to Guide Your Ministry**, Scott Morton. NavPress Publishing Group, 2003
11. **Starting Well: A Discipleship Journal Guide to Helping Others Grow in Christ**, compiled by Holz R. Adam. NavPress Publishing Group, 2003
12. **Making Kingdom Disciples: A New Framework**, Charles H. Dunahoo. P & R Publishing 2005

GoStrategic has a variety of resources available for Christian growth available at:

www.gostrategic.org

Discipleship Scriptures

The Vision of Discipleship

Matthew 28:18-20

Purpose of Discipleship

Colossians 1:28-29

The Way of the Lord

Acts 9:2

Acts 18:25-26

Acts 19:9-23

Steps to Maturity

Selection: Luke 6:13

Association: Matthew 28:20

Consecration: Matthew 11:29

Commitment: Matthew 4:17-20

Impartation: John 20:22

Self Denial: Mark 10:17-22

Matthew 16:24-25

Luke 14:26

Teachable: Romans 13:1-7

Obedience: II Timothy 3:1-5

Demonstration: John 13:15

Imitation: I Corinthians 11:1-3

Release: Ephesians 5:21-6:3

Delegation: Matthew 4:19

Submission: Hebrews 13:7-17

Supervision: Mark 8:17

Reproduction: John 15:16

Fatherhood: John 8:28

Death: John 12:24 -26

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THE SPIRIT OF THE DISCIPLINES: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD CHANGES LIVES
by Dallas Willard, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988

1. DISCIPLESHIP: FOR SUPER-CHRISTIANS ONLY?

The word "disciple" occurs 269 times in the New Testament. "Christian" is found only three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to the disciples... The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ.

But the point is not merely verbal. What is more important is that the kind of life we see in the earliest church is that of a special type of person. All of the assurances and the benefits offered to humankind in the gospel evidently presuppose such a life and do not make realistic sense apart from it; The disciple of Jesus is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian - especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast lane on the straight and narrow way. He stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of God.

2. UNDISCIPLED DISCIPLES

For at least several decades the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one may remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship. Contemporary American churches in particular do not require following Christ in His example, spirit and teachings as a condition of membership - either of entering into or continuing in fellowship of a denomination or a local church. Any exception to this claim only serves to highlight its general validity and make the general rule more glaring. So far as the visible Christian institutions of our day are concerned, discipleship clearly is optional... Churches are filled with "undisciplined disciples," as Jess Moody has called them. Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have not yet decided to follow Christ.

Little good results from insisting that Christ is also supposed to be Lord: to present his lordship as an option leaves it squarely in the category of the white-wall tires and stereo equipment for the new car. You can do without it. And it is - alas! - far from clear what you would do with it. Obedience

and training in obedience from no intelligible doctrinal or practical unity with the salvation presented in recent versions of the gospel.

3. GREAT OMISSIONS FROM THE GREAT COMMISSION

A different model was instituted in the Great Commission Jesus left the church. The first goal he set forth for the early church was to use his all-encompassing power and authority to make disciples... Having made disciples, these alone were to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. With this twofold preparation they were to be taught to treasure and keep "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Christian church of the first century resulted from following this plan for church growth - a result hard to improve upon.

But in place of Christ's plan, historical drift has substituted: "Make converts (to a particular faith and practice) and baptize them into church membership." This causes two great omissions from the Great Commission to stand out. Most important, we start by omitting the making of disciples or enrolling people as Christ's students, when we should let all else wait for that. We also omit the step of taking our converts through training that will bring them ever increasingly to do what Jesus directed.

4. DISCIPLESHIP THEN

When Jesus walked among humankind there was a certain simplicity to being a disciple. Primarily it meant to go with him, in an attitude of study, obedience, and imitation. There were no correspondence courses. One knew what to do and what it would cost. Simon Peter exclaimed: "Look, we've left everything and followed you!" (Mark 10:28). Family and occupations were deserted for long periods to go with Jesus as he walked from place to place announcing, showing, and explaining the governance of God. Disciples had to be with him to learn how to do what he did.

Imagine doing that today. How would family members, employers, and coworkers react to such abandonment? Probably they would conclude that we did not much care for them, or even for ourselves. Did not Zebedee think this he watched

his two sons desert the family business to keep company with Jesus (Mark 1:20)? Ask any father in a similar situation. So when Jesus observed that one must forsake the dearest things - family, "all that he hath," and "his own life also" (Lk. 14) insofar as that was necessary to accompany him, he stated in simple fact: it was the only possible doorway to discipleship.

5. DISCIPLESHIP NOW

Though costly, discipleship once had a very clear, straightforward meaning. The mechanics are not the same today. We cannot literally be with him in the same way as his first disciples could. But the priorities and intentions - the heart or inner attitudes - of the disciples are forever the same. In the heart of a disciple there is a desire, and there is decision or settled intent. The disciple of Christ desires above all else to be like him...

Given this desire, usually produced by the lives and words of those already in The Way, there is yet a decision to be made: the decision to devote oneself to becoming like Christ. The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christlike and so dwelling in his "faith and practice," systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end. By these actions, even today, one who enrolls in Christ's training, becomes his pupil or disciple.

And if we intend to become like Christ, that will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us, as well as to ourselves. Of course, attitudes that define the disciple cannot be realized today by leaving family and business to accompany Jesus on his travels about the countryside. But discipleship can be made concrete by loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, walking the second mile with an oppressor - general, living out the gracious inward transformations of faith, hope, and love. Such acts -carried out by the disciplined person with manifest grace, peace, and joy - make discipleship no less tangible and shocking today that were those desertions of long ago. Anyone who will enter into The Way can verify this, and he or she will prove that discipleship is far from dreadful.

6. THE COST OF NONDISCIPLESHIP

In 1937 Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave the world his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. It was a masterful attack on "easy Christianity" or "cheap grace," but it did not set aside - perhaps it even enforced - the view of discipleship as a costly spiritual excess, and only for those especially driven or called to it. It was right to point out that one cannot be a disciple of Christ without forfeiting things normally sought in human life, and that one who pays little in the world's coinage to bear his name has reason to wonder where he or she stands with God. But the cost of nondiscipleship is far greater - even when this life alone is considered - than the price paid to walk with Jesus.

Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring (John 10:10). The cross-shaped yoke of Christ is after all an instrument of liberation and power to those who live in it with him and learn the meekness and lowliness of heart that brings rest to the soul... The correct perspective is to see following Christ not only as the necessity it is, but as the fulfillment of the highest human possibilities and as life on the highest plane.

BIBLICAL SELECTION: MATTHEW 28:16-20

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Reflective questions

The following questions can be used for discussion within a small group, or used for journal reflections by individuals:

1. Dallas Willard makes a strong plea for churches to emphasize discipleship (teaching new converts how to live as Jesus commanded) and not merely membership (letting new Christians alone once they have joined the church). Describe your church experience in light of these two approaches.
2. According to Section 3, what are the two great omissions from the Great Commission? Read the passage from Matthew 28:16-20, noting the exact words that Jesus used.
3. Willard says that the disciple of Christ “desires above all else to be like him (Christ).” Who are some of the people you have desired “to be like,” and how did you go about becoming more like each of those people?
4. There has been a lot of discussion about how costly it is to be a disciple. According to Section 6, what is the cost of nondiscipleship?
5. Willard writes, “If we intend to become like Christ, that will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us, as well as to ourselves.” What would change about your life if you were to focus all your energies on becoming like Christ? What kind of reaction would you get from those around you?

Suggested exercises

The following exercises can be done by individuals, shared between spiritual friends, or used in the context of a small group. Choose one or more of the following:

1. This week commit to memory Willard’s powerful sentence about the cost of nondiscipleship (“Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace,...”). Write it on a card and carry it with you. Allow yourself to yearn for peace, love, faith, hopefulness, power, and abundance of life.
2. Willard lists a few things we can do today that are both commanded by Christ and are Christ-like action (Section 5). This week make an effort to love your enemies by praying for them, blessing those who curse you, and walking the second mile with someone who might be oppressing you.
3. Jesus instructed his followers to “obey everything that I have commanded” (Matt. 28: 16-20). Go through the gospel of Matthew and list all the things Jesus commanded us to do. Your list will make up a mosaic of what the basic Christian life should look like according to Jesus.
4. Meditate on the lordship of Christ. Examine your life to see how much of it actually falls under Jesus’ authority. Instead of focusing on the cost of giving these areas over to Christ, focus on the high price you have been paying by keeping them under your control.

