



The state of your spirituality does not rest on how you feel, but rather on who you are—and who you are becoming. God is in the soul-making business, and He does promise to transform you.

The key idea is becoming a disciple.

In Christian circles, we often talk of “discipling” someone, “being” disciplined, or going to a church where there is a strong emphasis on discipleship. The problem is that most of the time, that means going where you will be spoon-fed or bottle-fed. Where someone is actively teaching while you are passively taking notes.

Someone is discipling you, which means how it affects you is based on whether they are a good discipler, or whether the church is effective in terms of discipleship.

In other words, discipleship is something you *receive*.

This is why people talk about being fed or complain that they aren’t being fed. Discipleship isn’t really about them, it’s about something that happens *to* them. There is an active discipleship force, and they are the passive recipients.

But if that’s the way it works, why aren’t more people disciples like we read about in the Bible, particularly when, in truth, there is greater access to gifted teachers (online) than ever before?

Our confusion stems from the fact that this is not what discipleship is about. The word *disciple* is from the Greek word *mathetes* (μαθητες) and literally means “learner.” You can only be a learner if you are the one doing the learning. The point is that you, as a disciple – as a learner – are to be actively engaged in learning. It is *your* responsibility to take up the mantle of self-development.

Think about how this worked with Jesus. He invited a very select group of men and women to do life with Him for approximately 36 months. Formally, there were the 12 disciples, but there were also women such as Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene whom he invested in as well. There was an invitation to learn—not to enter into a passive process of being fed.

We certainly know that not all of the 12 took this invitation to heart; one in particular didn’t seem to learn much of anything. If discipleship was simply something “done” to you or for you, Jesus failed epically as a discipler with Judas.

Anyone want to say that Jesus was not a good discipler?

Then get that understanding of discipleship out of your head.

Here’s the truth about being a learner: growing spiritually is something that can be served by other people but ultimately must be owned personally by you. Too many followers of Christ view discipleship as something that is done to them and for them, almost like a personal enrichment program or getting a life coach.

No.

That’s why in the New Testament book of Hebrews we’re told that people who keep looking to get “fed” are in a state of arrested development. They’re like babies who never grow up, always wanting their bottle. If you think I’m being sarcastic in how I paraphrase it, read it yourself:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have **trained themselves** to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:11–14, NIV)

Growing in your faith is not about finding the best teaching, making sure you land in the best small group, and taking the best classes or seminars you can.

Those are all fine add-ons, but the heart of the challenge is for you to become an active, self-motivated, self-feeding *learner*.

And not only a learner, but also a player. And that's what we'll turn to next month.

Blessings,

Pastor David