

The Disciple and the Holy Spirit - 1

John 14:15-18

Introduction

This series of teaching that we have been undertaking focuses on the topic of “Discipleship” as Jesus taught it. He said that if anyone wanted to follow Him as a disciple then there were 3 essential things that we must do individually:

- Firstly, we must deny¹ ourselves. To deny your self is to say an emphatic “No!” to our selfish nature and selfish desires.
- Secondly, we must take up our cross daily.² In the ancient world, the cross was a symbol of suffering and death. Anyone carrying a cross was on his or her way to a horrible death. At the time, when Jesus spoke these words, the disciples did not think about Jesus’ crucifixion. It was far from their thoughts. Consequently, to them it meant going to a place where they would suffer and lose their lives in death. Today we know that the death by crucifixion Jesus was referring to was essentially a metaphor for “losing” one’s self; one’s dreams, plans, future and success etc., - everything!
- Thirdly, we must follow Jesus i.e., to accompany Jesus on the road or in the same path. It is this last point that we want to focus on in the next few weeks. How are we to follow Jesus today? Of course, the answer includes the many things that Jesus taught and did, such as loving God and loving people. But the question also points to the relationship between the disciple and the Holy Spirit.

Following Jesus

So far, we have learnt that to follow as a disciple is to be a learner-follower of Jesus Christ. This means much more than attending Bible studies and then going on with our lives in the same old way. It is far more radical than that. So far, we have learnt that discipleship involves three very important principles. Principles that we must apply if we are going to be the kind of disciple that Jesus will accept.³

¹ The Greek word used in Matt. 16:24 is *aparneomai*, meaning to deny utterly, that is, disown, abstain etc. This is an extreme word. It implies that we disown our self, forgetting, and losing sight of one’s self and own interest. See Matt. 26:34-35,75.

² Luke 9:23

³ Matt. 10:37-40

The 3 principle truths are:

- Firstly, our learning is to be “relational” learning⁴ in which we learn from Jesus by means of our relationship with Him. Such learning takes place over the rest of our lives. It is like a life-long journey.
- Secondly, it is learning to become like Jesus.⁵ The disciple is not exempt from anything that Jesus went through. He leads us and calls us to follow him wherever He goes.
- Thirdly, it is learning to do/obey Jesus’ instructions. Jesus’ instructions or commands implies obedience is and practical application.⁶ A disobedient disciple is an anomaly.

So, the question we now face is a very important and practical one: “How did Jesus help His disciples to learn from Him?” It will help us to realize that Jesus used 3 things to teach His disciples so that we can be cognizant of them in our lives today:

- Firstly, there are His Words. We learn a great deal about Jesus; and how to follow Him from the things that He said. He made many profound statements about what to believe and what to do – For example, Jesus taught that the 2 Great Commandments are: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”⁷ So, as the disciple follows Jesus today, we are to hear and apply what He says in our daily lives today and every day.
- Secondly, there are His Works. We also learn by paying attention to what Jesus did and how He did it. For example, take His miracles. John says that the miracles of Jesus were signs and that they revealed truth.⁸
- Thirdly, there are the experiences that Jesus exposed the disciples to and from which they learned to follow Him. They learned how they could follow Him practically.⁹

A Mini-series of 3 lessons

Over the next few weeks, we will focus on the following theme of the Disciple and the Holy Spirit taken from the Gospel of John. We will deal with the subject under the following headings:

⁴ Matt. 11:28-30. The word translated as “learn” in verse 29 is *manthano* – to learn, to or understand as a pupil or learner. It is derived from the same word as *mathetes* – to make disciples.

⁵ Matt. 10:25

⁶ Luke 6:46-49

⁷ Matt. 22:37-

⁸ John 2:11; 20:30-31; compare Mark 5:35-43 with Acts 9:36-43

⁹ Compare Matt. 17:1-13 with 2 Pet. 1:16-21

1. The Promise of the Holy Spirit.
Jesus spoke about a promise that the Father made concerning the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ What was this promise?
2. The Work of the Holy Spirit.
Jesus told Nicodemus about a spirit birth that came “from above” as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Nicodemus could not understand what Jesus was saying but Jesus made it clear that it was a spiritual, not a natural birth.
3. The Ways of the Holy Spirit.
Applying a metaphor, from nature i.e. of the mysterious movement of the air in wind, Jesus explained the mysterious ways of the Holy Spirit; we can experience, but not see this spiritual birth. This means that this is miraculous, real, and spiritual experience worked by the Holy Spirit.

The Context John's Gospel

The Gospel of John

When we read the Gospel of John, we note that it is similar, yet different from the other Gospels because John's timeline is different. John begins His Gospel in eternity past whereas the others¹² begin either with the events leading to the birth or the ministry of Jesus.

John also spends time recording the personal interviews and dealings Jesus had with individuals like the calling of people like Nathaniel, the apostles, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman etc. Then John spends a lot of time on that night of Jesus' betrayal. John tells us about what Jesus said to the disciples that night.

The “Farewell Discourse”

They are all in the upper room to celebrate the Passover¹³ and it is the last night that Jesus would be with them on earth. Jesus was acutely aware of the significance of the occasion. He was going to suffer and die the next day. The devil had thrust the treacherous betrayal into Judas' heart, yet Jesus got up and

¹⁰ Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39

¹¹ John 3:1-21

¹² The “Synoptic Gospels” have a similar view – the term refers to sharing the same view of Jesus' life in terms of view and structure. John is still dealing with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, but he compresses the timeframe and gives much more space to the last week of Jesus' life than the Synoptics do.

¹³ Note that throughout his Gospel, John points out the distinctive Jewish feasts especially that of the Passover, making it clear that the Lord's Supper was distinct from the Passover, although it was instituted on the occasion of Jesus' last celebration of the Passover.

washed the feet of the disciples, including that of Judas. As they ate the Passover meal, Jesus became troubled in spirit and He dealt with Judas in an amazing way. Then Judas left to betray Jesus, and when the meal was over, Jesus instituted the “Lord’s Supper.”

Now Jesus began to teach the Disciples about important topics such as His suffering and death, a new commandment, spiritual fruitfulness, and prayer, etc. Jesus spend most of the time teaching about the Holy Spirit – who He was and what He was to do i.e. His Person and Work. This is the important thing for the disciples to focus on, but they were in such a condition, that they might not have appreciated its significance at that time.

The Disciples’ Reaction

The reaction of the disciples was one of shock, fear, and confusion.¹⁴ This is readily understandable because Jesus told them that He was going away and that they could not follow immediately. They were shocked because they expected a different scenario to play out. They thought that there would be a conflict with the status quo, with the Jews and with the Romans. But they thought that Jesus would miraculously defeat the opposition and bring in the fullness of the Kingdom of God with great glory and power. They did not realize that He was to first suffer, and die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. They did not “hear” His teaching and warning’s. So they were stunned, they were shocked and confused.

They were afraid because Jesus said that He was going away. Feelings of abandonment and loneliness filled their hearts and they felt like orphans. Questions filled their hearts, questions like “Who would lead them? Who would teach them? Who would do miracles” etc.? In response, Jesus consoled them with the promise of His resurrection¹⁵ and return.¹⁶ However, Jesus emphasized the coming of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

Jesus’ response to their reaction was teaching. This is very significant because we seldom follow Jesus’ way in the Church today. We try to change the way people feel in response to what God says or does. We tell them not to be concerned or not to worry. We comfort their feelings, but Jesus taught them from a perspective of faith and hope. He often responded to their need by teaching, and here it was emotional. He did not negate or deny what they felt, but He taught them about sending the Holy Spirit in His stead, about His resurrection and return.

¹⁴ John 14:1,5,8,22

¹⁵ John 14:19-20; 16:16-30; 20:19,26

¹⁶ John 14:3,28

¹⁷ John 14:16-17,25-26

What Jesus said about the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was coming

Jesus was going away, but He would send a replacement – the Holy Spirit. Jesus describes this sending in various ways, showing the unity of the Father and Son.¹⁸ This is very important for us to recognize that a Person, a Divine Being was going to replace Jesus – not with something, but with someone! This is clear from two things: firstly, by the way Jesus spoke. He spoke about the Holy Spirit as a Person, using the personal pronoun “He” despite the fact that grammatically, the Greek word for Spirit is *pneuma* meaning, breath, or wind. *Pneuma* is in the neuter, so technically Jesus should have said “it.” Jesus said “He” every time. He never referred to the Holy Spirit as an “it” as one would talk about an influence or thing.¹⁹ Secondly, Jesus ascribed the relationships and actions that only a person is capable of, to the Holy Spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit lives (with and within the believer); and we receive Him; we know Him. The Holy Spirit teaches and reminds us; He bears witness; He convicts; He guides; hears and speaks to us; He glorifies Jesus and declares what He hears etc.²⁰ Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit does what only God can do. He has the attributes that only God has, making Him God, the Holy Spirit, equal with the Father and God, the Son.

Jesus used the term: “another” to describe the Holy Spirit and it is important to note the specific word that Jesus used because it reveals the truth that the Holy Spirit is like Jesus, yet He is not Jesus.

There are 2 Greek words translated as “different” – *allos* and *heteros*. The word, “*allos*” means “another of exactly the same kind.” The word, “*heteros*” means “another of a different kind.” We illustrate this with two items that are similar to, but not precisely the same e.g. a car, pen or dress of different colours. They are the same thing, but they are not exactly the same in every detail. The Holy Spirit and Jesus are exactly the same in essence and nature. Jesus would not leave the disciples as orphans; He would come to them in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would make everything of Jesus available to them. He would do everything for them that Jesus had done for them.

Jesus is our advocate who comes alongside to help us plead the case against us.²¹ The Greek word used here is “*parakletos*,” which means “one called

¹⁸ John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; cp. 5:19-30

¹⁹ John 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-8,13-15

²⁰ John 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:8-11,13-

²¹ 1 John 2:1

alongside to help.”²² That is why some call him the “Paraclete” – a counsellor who helps those who are in trouble with the law. The Holy Spirit is and does everything for us that Jesus was and did for the Disciples.

The “Spirit of truth”

Jesus called the Holy Spirit, “Spirit of truth.”²³ This was a special title that describes who the Holy Spirit is by describing what He does. He communicates the truth about Jesus, who is the truth.²⁴

Furthermore, He lives with and will be in the disciple. This is a very important truth to embrace. God was with believers during the old covenant, by living among them in the tabernacle and the temple, but also by coming on individuals by his Spirit. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit comes to live within the believer today. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Spirit will come on believers and permanently indwell them.²⁵

Conclusion

There are 3 things to remember here:

Firstly, we are disciples who are called to follow Jesus, learning in a relational way. We are Christ-centred or focused aiming to be like Jesus and obey Jesus.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is and does what Jesus did. He is a Divine Person exactly like Jesus; doing for us all that Jesus did for His disciples during His earthly ministry. He is God, the Holy Spirit; the “Paraclete” – one called alongside to help.

Thirdly, we need the Holy Spirit to live and work in us teaching us and helping us to personally grasp the truth.²⁶

Personal Application

1. What did you learn from Jesus’ Words?
2. What did you learn from Jesus’ Works?
3. What is your experience of the Holy Spirit?

²² It is translated “Advocate/Helper/Counsellor” in various English Bibles – John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7.

²³ John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13

²⁴ John 14:26; 16:12-15; cp. John 14:6

²⁵ John 14:23; 7:39

²⁶ 1 John 2:20,27; 1 Cor. 2:14. Paul