

GraceLife Articles - Dr. Charlie Bing

No. 7 - *Disciples Are Made Not Born!** - *Grace in Focus*, May 1992

Synopsis:

A summary of a longer journal article of the same title. It shows that not all believers are disciples and that the conditions for eternal salvation and discipleship are different.

Disciples are made, not born. This is clearly evident in the life of Peter. The recurrent calls of Christ to Peter to follow Him show that there is a sense in which a disciple can always become *more of a disciple*. The call to follow persists throughout the life of a disciple. In Peter's life we see a funnel effect. The progressive calls to follow begin with a general direction and commitment, but become more and more specific in what that commitment entails. Each time the disciple is called to follow, new significance is attached. With each call, the disciple is challenged to a deeper commitment and a greater sacrifice.

Discipleship is a direction or orientation, not a state. It is a committed and progressive following of Jesus Christ as Master. Anywhere on one's journey toward becoming like Christ one can be called a disciple, even in the midst of a temporary failure. It seems reasonable to state that anyone who rejects the challenge to commit himself to Christ ceases to follow and removes himself from the path of discipleship.

To confuse the call to discipleship with the call to salvation is a simplistic and confusing approach to the Scriptures and real-life experience. It is disturbing to take the conclusions of the Lordship position to their inevitable end. If the deeper relationship of discipleship is not distinguished from salvation, then many or most professing evangelicals - *including Lordship Salvationists* - are lost. Hull shows the incongruity of such a view with reality when he speaks of true disciples:

If disciples are born not made, while these characteristics would take time to develop, they would develop 100 percent of the time in the truly regenerate. Therefore, every single Christian would be a healthy, reproducing believer. If people did not reflect the disciple's profile, then they would not be Christians (Bill Hull, [*The Disciple Making Pastor*](#) [1988]: p.55).

Lordship Salvation teaching has imposed a standard for salvation that most professing Christians cannot meet. This *by itself* does not make it wrong. But it does make it dubious in the extreme.

The issues of salvation and discipleship must remain distinct if one is to appreciate the wonders of each. The call to salvation through faith alone with no other conditions beautifies the doctrine of grace. The call to discipleship with its hard conditions make the Christian life more meaningful and purposeful. Not surprisingly then, Lordship Salvation theology is detrimental to the Church since it fails to keep the issues of salvation and discipleship distinct. As Hull writes,

The "disciples are born and not made" theology has many harmful effects. Some quarters accept it because they have not stood that theology toe to toe with Jesus' definitions. When it does stand toe to

toe, it creates a gospel of works. It adds to the requirements for salvation. Not only does it require faith in Christ, but commitment to the disciple's profile is required. Unless you are willing to commit to world evangelism, labor in the harvest field, placing Christ before everything in your life, then in the words of Jesus, "You cannot be My disciple" ([Luke 14:25-35](#)); therefore you are denied salvation ([The Disciple Making Pastor](#), p.55).

Disciples are made, not born. When we understand this, our Gospel remains truly of *grace*. Then as those saved by grace, we are motivated to cooperate with God and commit and submit ourselves to His purpose of conforming us to His Son, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.