



A Model for Balanced Discipleship

Christians agree that Jesus directed us to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. But making disciples means different things to different people. How can we know when we have made a disciple? Is someone who has passed a course or series of courses a disciple? Is someone a disciple who has learned Bible doctrine? Or have we made a disciple when we teach a Christian to have a regular quiet time or devotional?

A survey of discipleship programs, courses, and books demonstrates the different understandings of what it means to make a disciple. Some are never clear in what they are trying to produce, and it quickly becomes evident that there are different ways to get there. Some material is weighted heavily towards knowing doctrine or the Bible. Others choose to emphasize disciplined habits such as prayer, Bible study, and witnessing. Still other material might focus on relationships or on character.

One element that seems consistently lacking in discipleship materials is proper motivation. Perhaps this is why many who pass discipleship courses fail to continue their discipleship commitments. Jesus attached a high cost to discipleship. Disciples must be motivated to pay the price. Jesus often spoke of blessings, consolations, rewards, and eternal significance in discussions about discipleship. A truly motivated disciple will overcome all obstacles to learn doctrine and the Bible, do the necessary disciplines, and develop the necessary relationships.

That is where grace comes in. The grace of God that brings us salvation is the motivation for following Christ in discipleship. Sadly, many or most discipleship materials seem to miss a consistent application of the blessings of grace to the Christian's life and growth. Yet Jesus incorporated grace in his discipleship teachings as motivation. He spoke of temporal and eternal rewards, a future accounting for our deeds (the judgment seat of Christ), and eternal significance (cf. Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-27; Mark 10:28-31; Luke 9:23-26; John 8:31-32).

To make a disciple, we must begin with the end in mind. In Matthew 10:25, Jesus says, "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher." Our goal must be to have Christlikeness realized in the disciple. Discipleship programs, courses, or materials should produce a committed follower of Jesus Christ who is grounded in grace and thus motivated to grow in the characteristics of a disciple as taught by our Lord.

With this in mind, here is a four-part model for balanced discipleship:

1. What does God want me to *become*? This involves transformation as the disciple becomes more like Jesus in inner character.

2. What does God want me to *know*? Information in the form of doctrine and Bible knowledge are necessary to a godly life.

3. What does God want me to *do*? We can't have true discipleship without discipline, though we can have discipline without true discipleship. The focus here is on application of truth in life and behavior.

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4. What does God want me to *enjoy*? Here is the motivation for ongoing discipleship as the disciple gains an eternal perspective through the appreciation of God's grace.

Conclusion

Discipleship is more than knowing. It is more than doing. It is knowing, and doing, and being for the *right reasons*. Those reasons are a Christian's response to God's grace. We know that we are producing disciples of Christ when we see people balanced in Christlikeness through transformation, information, application, and motivation. Such a disciple will produce similar disciples.

