

“Discipleship”
Psalms 84, 115, 123; Proverbs 4, 14
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Introduction

- I became a Christian in the spring of 1974. In the spring of 1979, I went to Talbot Theological Seminary. I wanted to learn and understand the Bible better. My first class was in Matthew. After the class was over, the home Bible Study group that I was attending at the time asked me to teach them. Me? No way. Terror! I reluctantly said “Okay” and thus started my time teaching the Bible. About six months after I was leading this home Bible Study, one of my friends asked me to disciple him. After much agonizing I said no as I did not feel I was ready.
- **Question:** What is discipleship?
- Dictionary.com indicates the following: *Discipleship: the condition or situation of being a disciple, a follower, or a student of some philosophy, especially a follower of Christ.* – **Dictionary.com**
- In the Bible the word discipleship isn’t used, but the word disciple is found more than 250 times. All of these usages, except two which are in Isaiah, are found in the Gospels and the book of Acts.
- Nelson’s Bible Dictionary indicates the following: *DISCIPLE - A student, learner, or pupil. In the Bible the word is used most often to refer to a follower of Jesus.* – **Nelson’s Bible Dictionary**
- The Greek word used in the New Testament is μαθητής (mathētēs) and means “**a learner, disciple, or pupil**”.
- Let’s look at the usage of the word “disciple” from the perspective of the discipler, the one who does the discipling. We see the discipler wants to:
- **(1) Find followers**
- **Matt. 4:18-20** *While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*
- **(2) Encourage change**
- **Matt. 10:24-25** *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.*
- **John 13:35** *By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*
- **(3) Train and teach**
- **Luke 11:1** *Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”*

- **John 8:31-32** *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*
- **(4) Encourage obedience**
- **Matt. 21:6** *The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.*
- **(5) Understand the cost**
- **Mark 8:34** *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*
- **(6) Bear much fruit**
- **John 15:8** *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*
- Let’s see what Proverbs and Psalms, from the perspective of the disciple, can teach us about discipleship and being a disciple.
- **Lesson**
- **Point #1: Disciples are followers**
- **Psa. 84:2** *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.*
- This Psalm was composed by the Sons of Korah, probably during the time when the Tabernacle was the center of worship for Israel. The Tabernacle is where the people of Israel would come into the presence of God. The author longs and yearns for the privilege of meeting God among His people. His feeling was deep and he hungered for his God. It was a desire that could only be fulfilled in God’s presence. Not only did he yearn for God, he would sing for joy to be in His presence. He wanted to rejoice and praise God and this brought him joy, a loud ringing cry to be in God’s presence.
- **Psa. 84:10** *For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*
- Time in God’s house and in His presence for even a single day is worth more than thousand days spent anywhere else. He wanted to be a servant in God’s house, even to be the one who waited at the door rather than living in a luxurious house. There was nothing that could rival being in God’s presence.
- **Psa. 123:2** *Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He has mercy upon us.*
- This Psalm is one of the Songs of Ascent and was sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem at feast time. They were looking forward to being in God’s presence and to be his servant, ready to do His slightest desire, eagerly awaiting that time when he can see the Lord and do His bidding. His gaze is fixed on God and is waiting eagerly to do anything He commands.

- Discipleship is not once week or once a month activity, but is a daily and moment by moment process that the disciple can observe the discipler, can come to know the discipler, and learn from the discipler, following close after him and becoming more and more like him.
- **Point #2: Disciples are to be changed**
- **Psa. 84:5** *Blessed are those whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*
- A disciple is one who finds his strength in God. His heart is set on the pathway to become more like God. The disciple is changed by trusting in God's strength instead of his own. He does not rely on himself, those around him, or what the world has to offer. The closer he gets to God the greater his strength. He is not escaping from the world, but is being prepared for life in the world.
- **Psa. 115:11** *You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is their help and their shield.*
- Psalm 115 is one of the Psalms that was sung by the Jews during their Passover celebrations.
- In this verse the disciple is to put his trust in the Lord. God is his help and his shield. God protects those who are His. God is their guardian and defender for all those who put their trust in Him. The disciple's life is changed by becoming the person who trusts in God.
- The disciple is also to fear God: to respect and reverence Him, to realize that He is holy and righteous and cannot tolerate sin. Our fear of God does not cause us to run away from God, but to acknowledge that He is sovereign over the whole universe and we are dependent upon Him.
- **Pro. 14:29** *Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.*
- The disciple is to restrain his impulsiveness and to react slower, particularly in the area of anger and wrath. The person who is slow to anger reflects God's character. Why does someone get angry? Maybe it is when they don't get their own way, or their "rights" have been violated, or something that was owed to them was withheld or given to another.
- The disciple also gains great understanding. He will be changed by what he has learned. There is great wisdom in the ability to control one's response and attitude in tough circumstances. Patience is a trait that we should all strive to have.
- Disciples are not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed:
- **Rom. 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- **Point #3: Disciples are to be trained and taught**
- **Pro. 4:1-2** *Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.*

- The disciple is to hear the discipler and not ignore what is said. The disciple is to hold fast to the good teaching, and he is not to turn away from or forsake what he has learned. The disciple must be attentive to what is being taught. He must pay attention to the teaching that the discipler is providing.
- **Pro. 4:11** *I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.*
- The disciple is to learn wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to judge correctly and follow the best course of action based upon knowledge and understanding. The disciple's life is to be characterized by wisdom as he humbly submits to God.
- In a biblical sense a path is something that has come into existence as people have used it and indicates the life and direction a person has taken. The disciple can discern the correct way, the path of uprightness, as he goes along the path of life, and chooses the right path, the godly way, that gives firm ground and provides the best route. Uprightness includes both being morally and practically right.
- **Point #4: Disciples are to be obedient**
- **Pro. 4:4,20** *[My father] taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live...My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.*
- The disciple is one who holds fast, to grasp and not let go, to what has been taught. The words that are taught are to be kept, to be obeyed, to be followed. They are not words that are mere sayings, but they are meant to be life or death to the disciple.
- Disciples must be ready to receive what has been taught. It is too easy to hear the words, but not listen, not being attentive to them, and they are soon forgotten before they have made an impact. The disciple is to incline, or bend his ears, to fully understand what is said. He is to fully grasp what is said and obey what he has been taught.
- **Pro 4:14** *Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.*
- The disciple is one who is never to enter the path of the wicked, never follow after what the wicked one does or says. If the wicked way is never entered, it never has to be remedied. The disciple is the one who doesn't even consider the way of the world, the way of the wicked.
- If the disciple does enter and walks on the path of the wicked, he is to leave it as soon as possible and stop following it. He is to recognize the danger and return to the righteous path.
- **Pro 4:24-27** *Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*
- The disciple is one who does self-examination and reflection upon his life, being diligent to correct and putting away those things that do not look directly forward. He is very sensitive to what he says and does not speak crooked or devious talk.

- The disciple is one who ponders, who thinks upon, the path he is on. He makes sure that the path he is on is not evil but established upon what God wants from him. Never is the disciple to swerve to the right or left and get off the path. His path will be set, fixed, and established upon the path of righteousness.
- **Point #5: Disciples are to count the cost**
- **Psa. 115:1** *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!*
- The disciple realizes that when God does wonderful things, the glory should be given to God, not to himself, not to God's people. The repetition that we find in the Bible, the "**not to us**" in this verse, shows the importance and emphasis of what is being said: it is to the glory of God alone, not anything else, not to anyone else. The disciple realizes that all in his life should be focused upon God's glory and who He is: steadfast in love and steadfast in His faithfulness. The disciple needs to count the cost in his life and how to bring about God's glory.
- **Pro. 14:5-8** *A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies. A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding. Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.*
- The disciple has to count the cost that his life may be changed and some things that he is not to be or do: not lying, not bearing false witness, not being a scoffer, not being a fool. He is to be a seeker after truth, not associating with those who drag him away from God. He is to be prudent, rightly acting in a way that does not lead to evil or dishonoring God. This may mean the disciple may have to change those he spends time with and the things he does.
- **Pro. 14:12** *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*
- The disciple realizes that not everything that seems right or good, may not be that way at all. It may lead to death, and this isn't always as clear as we would like. The disciple needs to count the cost and ask himself if this person, or thing, or activity leads him closer to God or farther away from God. The disciple needs to seek God and His wisdom, to study His word, to seek wise counsel, to analyze things from a godly perspective. He is to abandon the way and the path of the world.
- **Point #6: Disciples are to bear much fruit**
- **Pro. 4:23** *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*
- The disciple who guards his heart, who is careful in what he brings into his life, in what he believes, what he does, and if he does this diligently, results in an abundance like a spring that provides much water. It is a life that God intends it to be. It is a life worth living. Notice here that is not a one-time event, it is something that needs to be done every day of our lives, to be diligent, to be vigilant.
- **Pro. 14:22** *Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.*

- The disciple is the one who devises good, not evil, both for themselves and others. He will be rewarded with God's steadfast love and faithfulness. God will protect them and reward them.
- **Pro. 14:27** *The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*
- The disciple understands that fearing God does not lead to less, but is a fountain that does not cease. Fear of the Lord is understanding who He is and understanding our relationship to Him. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, not its end. Fear of the Lord is to turn one away from evil and its snares. One of the benefits of fearing the Lord is to receive God's watchful care and protection.
- **Pro. 14:33** *Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.*
- The disciple has wisdom in his heart and it rests or abides in him. It is a characteristic in his life and manifests itself for all to see. This wisdom in the life of a disciple is made known even to a group of fools.
- The disciple's life is to result in bearing fruit, fruit that reflects God's work in their life as it says in Galatians 5:
- **Gal. 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
- **Summary**
- **Point #1: Disciples are followers** – Disciples must be devoted to following God.
- **Point #2: Disciples are to be changed** – Disciples are those whose strength is in God and through this are changed into the person God wants him to be.
- **Point #3: Disciples are to be trained and taught** – Disciples must be teachable and able to be trained.
- **Point #4: Disciples are to be obedient** – Disciples are those who are obedient to God following after Him and becoming like Him.
- **Point #5: Disciples are to count the cost** – Disciples must count the cost of what it means to be a follower, even if they lose their friends and their lives and their focus changes.
- **Point #6: Disciples are to bear much fruit** – Successful disciples are shown by the fruit they bear and the person that they are becoming.
- **Application**
- (1) Be committed to following after God and doing what He wants and doing all for His glory.
- (2) Be committed to being able to be taught by God through His word and through godly individuals.

- (3) Be committed to counting the cost and not being conformed to the world and not having the most friends or the most riches. It is more important to be the person God wants you to be than being or having anything else.
- After our prayer, please stand for the doxology. Let us pray.