

Finding Our Place In The Christian Church

The Body Of Jesus Christ

[Part 3]

Our Training and Equipping by God

Training and equipping is referred to in God's Word by the "religious" word disciple, the Greek word "mathētēs" meaning to learn by following.

A disciple is **not** only a pupil, but an adherent, or imitator of his teacher.

John 8:31 [NIV] *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'"*

Faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

John 13:35 [NIV] *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

True disciples are recognised by their actions.

John 15:8 [NIV] *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

Equipped by Jesus Christ to bear the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit [**Galatians 5:22-23**] the very character of the Creator God.

Acts 9:36 [NIV] *"In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor."*

The totality of our life is to express our discipleship in actions.

Too often the use of the words "disciple of Christ" is limited to preaching and teaching. In the above scripture we see this lady was confirming her discipleship of Jesus Christ by using the "charismata" she had received, that of serving and hospitality.

Isaiah 54:13 [NIV] *"All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children's peace."*

True training and equipping must come from the Creator God, proof that this is true is personal peace of mind.

If the teaching and equipping we are receiving is not bringing peace of mind, then we should question if it is from God or from humans influenced by Satan.

Acts 20:27-30 [NIV] *"For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."*

A directive to those who are leaders [elders] in the Church to realise that false teachers, **not** from God, could make disciples of some in the Church, by distorting, Greek word "diastrophō" two words meaning the act of turning away by misinterpreting, and corrupting the truth.

Human discipling only produces a “sect” in the Church or a “cult” out of the Church by the translating of scripture.

Discipling is the next step towards maturity from teaching.

A teacher at a school will teach a child knowledge, but it is the duty of the parent to train the child in the use of that knowledge.

It is God the Father who trains us through the Word [Jesus Christ] to become Christ’s disciples.

It is God who also equips us to do the job by gifts, just as a human parent passes on certain talents and authority to their children.

Matthew 10:1 [NIV] *“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”*

These gifts were given to the disciples just before Jesus Christ sent them out to do a job of work.

We can be taught year in and year out but unless this trains us by prompting us to acting on what we are being taught, we can never become disciples of Jesus Christ.

James 2:14-20 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?”*

We can really believe what we are being taught but unless this teaching turns to acts it is useless, we will never mature as God intends.

How then do we turn teaching into discipling?

Choose to become totally committed to God’s will – obedience to God –

John 7:17 [NIV] *“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”*

We then will not be deceived by false teachers who are seeking their own “disciples.”

John 13:17 [NIV] *“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”*

We also must act on the teaching we receive.

One young girl I heard of who refused to attend any more Bible Studies made the excuse, “I already know more than I do,” how true that can be.

Humble ourselves by fearing the Creator God –

Psalms 25:8-9 [NIV] *“Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”*

Acknowledge God’s Sovereignty and our sins against Him [**Psalms 51:4**] and humbly repent and accept God’s grace.

Psalms 25:12 [NIV] *“Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.”*

Fear God by treating Him as Lord, One who is supreme in all things.

Some people have to learn this the hard way through painful trials, because they will **not** learn through humility.

God has to bring such people to the point where they do cry out from the heart, *“please God help me, for no-one else will or can.”*

Endurance and Patience –

Hebrews 12:1 [King James] *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”*

Endurance is active even as patience is active.

The Greek word used is *“hupōmōnē”* meaning cheerful and hope-filled endurance.

Patience is waiting in a positive state of mind for God to take the initiative as to when He will act.

Psalms 40:1-2 [NIV] *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”*

Waiting on God until He acts for us.

James 5:7-8 [NIV] *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”*

The Greek word used in this scripture is different, *“makrōthumēō”* meaning to stand still and wait, to be long suffering, long spirited [temper with a very long fuse], forbearing.

This patience is linked to faith.

Hebrews 6:11-12 [NIV] *“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*

This patience brings with it promises. If we are impatient, we take the initiative out of God’s hands and thus do **not** accept Him as Sovereign.

Hebrews 6:15 [NIV] *“And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.”*

Many of God’s great leaders had these characteristics.

We as God’s pupils do **not** decide when or what He teaches us.

All the time God is not only feeding us information, He is also shaping our character through endurance and patience.

By Serving –

Matthew 20:25-28 [NIV] *“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”*

Jesus Christ shows us that the pathway to leadership is through serving, not the way the world seeks authority.

The key to having authority is to learn to be under authority, that of our Creator God.

If you want to have authority you have to become a servant, the Greek word translated servant is “*diakōnōs*” meaning an attendant, a waiter, one who runs errands. But the one who would be greatest must become a slave Greek word “*dōulōs*” a bond slave, a person with **no** personal rights **only** responsibilities towards his Master.

The higher up you want to go, the lower you have to start.

1 Peter 5:5-6 [NIV] *“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up **in due time.**”*

Notice the words “*in due time.*”

How Does God Train and Equip Us?

Directly by God Himself –

If God wants to start something new in His work or in the Church, He trains and equips a person Himself.

Examples of this are Moses, David, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Paul.

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man –

John 5:19-20 [NIV] *“Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.’”*

Jesus Christ never took the initiative Himself.

John 5:26-27 [NIV] *“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”*

Always the direction Jesus took came from God the Father.

John 14:9-10 [NIV] *“Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.’”*

All of Jesus’ words and actions were the Father working through Him.

Paul the Apostle –

Galatians 1:15-17 [NIV] *“But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”*

Paul who was to be sent to the Gentiles was taught and trained directly by the resurrected Jesus the Son of God.

Ephesians 3:1-7 [NIV] *“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles, Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.”*

Taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Taught by those who had been directly taught by God –

Moses trained Joshua.

Elijah trained Elisha.

Jesus trained the apostles.

Paul trained Timothy [and others].

By a seven-stage process –

A good example of this is the training of Timothy.

1) **2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15** [NIV] *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.” ... “and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

The bed rock of his training was learning God’s Word as a child.

2) **Acts 16:1-2** [NIV] *“He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.”*

Gained approval in the local church which is extremely important. He had earned a good reputation by proving he was willing to serve others.

3) **1 Timothy 4:14** [NIV] *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”*

Ordained for a job of work and received gift [“charisma”] from God to do the work.

2 Timothy 1:6 [NIV] *“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”*

Encouraged not to neglect the gift [“charisma”] he had supernaturally received.

4) **Philippians 2:22** [NIV] *“But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”*

Served as an apprentice with Paul as his teacher.

5) **1 Corinthians 4:17** [NIV] *“For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”*

Was then able to represent Paul his teacher who trusted him and had faith in his ability to fulfil the job given to do on Paul’s behalf.

1 Timothy 1:3-4 [NIV] *“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God’s work, which is by faith.”*

Instructions that Paul expected Timothy to be able to carry out.

6) **2 Timothy 4:1-5** [NIV] *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage, with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*

Here Paul was encouraging Timothy as a fellow minister with his own responsibilities “your ministry.”

7) **2 Timothy 2:2** [NIV] *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

Timothy then was given the job to train other men to teach others to start their training as God empowered them with gifts to further the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

We are all called to follow this course of training and empowering with the special gifts [“charisma”] that God has given us individually.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

When we do live our lives as a “living sacrifice” God will reveal our calling and re-educate our minds.

Then empower us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to fulfil that calling, with all the gifts we need, [“charisma”].

It is through recognising these gifts that we find our place in the Christian Church, the body of Jesus Christ on earth at this time.

Also my possible place in the future coming Kingdom of God has excited me as I try to wait patiently for its coming, and seek to share this with all who read the articles on this website.