

Discipleship: Why Is This the *Sine Qua Non* of the Christian Life?

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I. Introduction

Why do Christians and non-Christians alike struggle with addiction, divorce, teen pregnancy, depression, suicide, and everything else under the sun? What's missing in their lives that can help them avoid the heartache and misery that's inevitable in the human experience? What if God was real, what if He was our Father, what if He helped us up every time life knocked us to the ground?

II. Discipleship: Why Is This the Essential Part of Being a Christian?

What we lost in the Garden, when Adam and Eve fell, we lost our family relationship with God. God is our Father; we are His children. But when Satan blinded Adam and Eve and they decided to be god, to define good and evil for themselves (Genesis 2:9, 17), we put a GIANT barrier between our Heavenly Father and us. The result: we thought we lost our Father's love and support and thus we lost our ability to see clearly. Now we blamed each other (Genesis 3), now we murdered each other (Cain in Genesis 4), now we were arrogant and tyrannical (Lamech in Genesis 4), now out of sadness God had to wipe out the entire human race because of its wickedness (Genesis 6), now even after the new start sin and evil were still present within us (Genesis 9:20-29), now the entire human race once again sought to dethrone God (Genesis 11). All this left us blind orphans: we no longer saw God as our Loving Father or ourselves as His beloved children. Now, we saw everything that's wrong with us—even when there was nothing wrong—and we saw God as an angry, critical, hard-to-please Judge (Genesis 3). From the beginning it's been this way and *still* is today. How do humans treat each other today? Why do we murder? Why do we divorce? Why do teens get pregnant? Why are so many struggling with depression and anxiety? Why is the suicide rate among young men so high? Because we have lost our familial relationship with God. What hope does the human race have to get back what we lost in the Garden?

What Jesus came to restore, what did God promise Abraham and his descendants? That one day He would send a Seed to undo all the damage that Adam and his descendants had done (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), a promise that God made in the very beginning after we decided to walk away from Him (Genesis 3:15). And even though Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons kept making wicked mistakes (e.g., Judah in Genesis 38), God ensured that His promise of the Seed would be kept (Genesis 12-50, cf. 50:20). That Seed would be the one to turn back the curse (cf. Genesis 5:29). That Seed, that Deliverer, that Savior was Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:21; Galatians 3:16). Acts 10:38 says of Jesus, "who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." That's what Jesus Himself did for those who had been separated from God and His people, i.e., for the demon possessed, diseased, lepers and those paralyzed by sin (Mark 1:21-2:17) and that's what Jesus taught His disciples to also do for those alienated from God (Matthew 10). And that's what Jesus continued to do through His apostles in the book of Acts (Acts 1-28, cf. 26:12-18). Jesus had come to remove our orphan status and give us back our Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9-13, "*Our Father* in heaven..."). What is this that Jesus and His apostles did for the nations? Discipleship.

What is Discipleship? Discipleship is essentially reuniting the human race with their Heavenly Father. Once they're adopted into God's family by means of His Son's sacrifice, they are considered His children (John 1:12; Ephesians 5:8) and they consider each other fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters (Mark 10:29-30; 1 Timothy 5:1). Why does Jesus tell His disciples to go make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:18-20)? Because until the human race is reconciled with the God who created them, they will continue to kill each other, abuse each other, to suffer the consequences of walking away from the only One who can properly define for them good and evil, the only One who can enable them to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

A young man struggles to find a wife, he'd been addicted since he was 12 yrs old. He was terrified of everything in life and was very lazy. In his late twenties he had no girlfriend or car and was still living with his mom. He was a Christian, but in his mind God was angry with him because of his addiction and therefore he would never get a girlfriend, car, or move out of his mom's house. But then a pastor showed him how to see God as his Father. Jesus became real for the very first time and his life began to change. The Lord transformed him from a scared boy into a confident man. He still struggled with his addiction but not as much. He now had a job, his own place to live, a girlfriend, and a car. Years later and a girlfriend or two later, he was contemplating marriage. But he was struggling, "Is she the right one? Should I break up? Will it work?" The pastor walked alongside him again and helped him hear God's voice, this time about his search for a wife, how to hear God's direction as he searched for a wife. This is discipleship, taking people back to the God who made them, the Father who longs to be with them through thick and thin, the Lord who will show them how to deal with any and every problem.

III. Conclusion

Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."