

Discipleship: How to Face Life-Changing Moments Part 8

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I. Introduction

Now that God's given you the plan that will correct the problem He revealed, it's time to do what He said. But in order to succeed, you need someone who will cheer you on and challenge you when you stumble, get overwhelmed, or are outright rebellious. In other words, you need a trusted friend who will help you fulfill God's plan.

II. Discipleship: *ACCOUNT, Asking a Friend to Help You Fulfill God's Plan*

A life-changing moment happened, but you sought the Lord's voice and through observing, reflecting and discussing it with your friends, the Lord revealed the problem. So you sat down to make a plan that would fix this problem and you again sought the Lord's voice with the help of your friends. Now it's time to execute the plan so you ask a friend to hold you accountable.

Account, asking a friend to help you fulfill God's plan,

Family members should be close not isolated, having someone hold you accountable to what God told you may seem odd and intrusive, as if inviting someone into your private business who has no business being there. But this is an odd way of looking at your church family. If you had parents and brothers and sisters, would you think it odd that you only saw them twice a week? That the only time you heard from your parents was when they lectured you for 30 minutes to an hour two to three days a week? That your brothers and sisters knew nothing of your personal life or you of theirs? This would be an odd family made of individuals who are lost and struggling because they have no help or guidance and live isolated lives. Think: did you face something serious this past week? If you did, how many people in your church know about it? If the answer is zero, there's a giant problem. We would never intentionally do family like this, yet, that's how many of us do church. It's true that we're to rely on God not man but relying on God includes relying on the family He gave you (Romans 12:15). The idea, "My relationship with God is my business and no one else's" is beyond wrong. It denies what God has given us and made us: a close, intimate, united family that cares for each other. And our unity is not just with each other but with our Lord, to reject His family is to reject Him! (Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:20-26; Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; Hebrews 10:24-25).

A close friend doesn't just cheer you, they challenge you, this friend will want you to fulfill God's plan for your life. But they will also need to challenge, even rebuke, you when you need it, which is why they need to be a close trusted friend. They (and you) need to know that they can challenge you without fear of losing the friendship. A true friend will challenge you especially when they know you don't want to hear it (Matthew 16:23). They will die for you instead of themselves and when they challenge or rebuke you, it heals instead of wounds (John 15:13-15; Proverbs 17:17; 27:5-6, 9).

We're not meant to keep our sin to ourselves, James tells us that we must confess our sins to one another if we're to find healing from our sins (5:16). This requires opening our life—foibles and all—to trusted individuals who'll help us find the Lord's healing. Spiritual growth stalls unless we're constantly bringing our sin and flaws to the Lord (Ephesians 5:1-14).

If you don't have close friends, you need to make them, if you lack this kind of friend(s), then you need to make this kind of friend(s). This is someone who sees the best in you, so they defend and speak well of you. They also accept you for who you are (and I don't mean your sinful flaws, which they should challenge). They don't try to turn you into someone else; they accept how God made you (Psalm 139:13-16). To find these kinds of friends, you need to be this kind of friend (Proverbs 18:24). This takes sharing your life with theirs and vice versa, spending time with them outside church so that you not only discover each other's flaws but build trust in order to address them. And you're also supposed to laugh and enjoy life together. It's not just a string of serious conversations. You're sharing life together, all of it not just the chaos and problems (Mark 2:13-15; 6:30-32; 9:2; Luke 7:34).

Jesus holds Peter accountable as any true friend would (Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-19), the Lord's plan for Peter was for him to be one of the pillars of the church; he would bring the Jewish people into the church and Paul the Gentiles (Acts; Galatians 2:8) and Peter held the keys to the entrance of both (Matthew 16:18-19). However, Peter was hot tempered and often needed rebuke (John 18:1-11). So if you were putting together an A-team to lead your worldwide enterprise, Peter is the last guy you'd consider. In fact, you wouldn't consider him at all; you'd reject him on the spot. But the Lord loves rejects. He saw in Peter what no one else saw: yes, He saw his brash bravado, but He also saw a strength that could be harnessed and refined. All Peter needed was someone who loved him enough to encourage him, to correct him and fine-tune his strength. And because the Lord was his close friend, He had no problem correcting Peter, even severely (Matthew 16:21-17:2). And even before Peter would make the worst mistake of his life, his trusted friend assured him that he would recover from this devastating moment (Luke 22:61-62). Why? Because Jesus had prayed for him (Luke 22:31-34). Jesus helped Peter fulfill the Father's plan for his life. And before sending him off to fulfill it, He restored him from his three disastrous denials (John 21).

A man struggles to find a wife, his mother was the authority in the house; her husband did what she wanted or remained silent. She babied him into his twenties. She did everything for him: picked his clothes, gave him money, and modeled what he would eventually look for in a wife. He was a grown man but completely afraid of life, afraid of cooking, going to the bank, getting a job or a girlfriend. For sex and intimacy he preferred the virtual world of pornography. The Lord kept telling him how wrong this was, to take responsibility for himself and become a man instead of remaining a boy. Eventually he followed the Lord's plan: he got a job and moved out. He even found the woman he thought he'd marry...but then it fell apart. In fact, the Lord kept showing him through many people how this relationship would never work, but he wouldn't listen. Now he realized that she was wrong for him but was confused about the strong feelings he still had for her. "Why do I want to run back to her?! She's just like my mother and I behaved just like her weak husband?!" A friend helped him stay focused on God's plan and showed him why the Lord let it all happen and he understood.

III. Conclusion

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."