

Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Discipleship? (Part 6)

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I. Introduction

There are so many people who are just surviving, stuck in hopeless lives. And it's not just addicts who are addicted to meth. It's people who can't look others in the eye because they have no self-esteem. It's Christians who go to church every Sunday, read their Bibles, and pray and pray, but still the anxiety won't go away. How can we help free these people?

II. How to Help Someone Find their Way Back to God

First, it's a spiritual battle, when you're helping someone find their way back to God, the first thing you must realize is that it is a spiritual battle and your enemy is the leader of the spiritual forces behind all of the darkness in this world. Therefore, your IQ, how much you know of psychology, or anything else will not be enough to help the lost get back to God. Your enemy is cunning, knows more about *everything* than you, and he's been doing this for millennia. The only way you will defeat him is by relying on everything given to you by the only one who is greater than your enemy: God, Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 John 4:4.

Second, your enemy's tactics haven't changed, the first two people Satan led astray were Adam and Eve, Genesis 3. And the same method he used to fool them, he uses today on everyone and it works, just look around. He is a master manipulator and his main weapon is deception, John 8:44; Revelation 12:9. This is helpful because you will always know how people ended up living miserable lives. Satan's playbook is always the same.

Third, find out how Satan deceived them away from God, addicts are not born, they're made. Atheists aren't born, they're made. People with intimacy issues aren't born, they're made. People who get panic attacks around crowds aren't born, they're made. Your job is to find out how they got there. How did Satan get them to believe that they're fat and ugly, are someone who needs antidepressants, or that their life is hopeless? The first people Satan uses to deceive them is their parents, even Christian parents. He will use everything he can, their friends, relatives, circumstances, foolish decisions, etc., etc. He will use everything to convince them of a false identity: you're a prostitute, you're an addict, you're a loser, no one likes you, etc. And you need to know how Satan created their false identity, so that God can destroy it and replace it with their true identity. In this step, pay attention to what-I-believe statements, statements that tell you what they believe about God, themselves, and their life, e.g., "I'm never gonna get a girlfriend," or "God's mad at me."

Fourth, show them how to find their way back to God,

Show them their true starting point, no matter how hopeless they feel, one thing is certain, this is not how they were born. God made them something wonderful and with a definite purpose, Genesis 1:27 (Romans 2:15); Psalm 139:13-16. So begin to show them their true identity and use their own life to prove it to them. No matter how bad they think their life is, you will find echoes of who they really are in what they're good at, what they've achieved, in their character, etc.....even in their hopes and dreams that were never realized.

Teach them how to wear God's armor, as they begin to live their true identity, realize that they will stumble and be tricked by the enemy over and over. So prepare them for this by reminding them to wear their armor—it's not just about helping *them*, but showing them how to help others be free of Satan, a.k.a. discipleship. The key to the armor is that it is God who will fight Satan, not them; it is God's truth that will protect them and set them free, Ephesians 6:10-17. The key to wearing it is belief and connecting God's truth to their life.

Teach them how to confess and repent, if they fail to use the armor, they need to confess to God the lie they just believed and then ask God for the truth, e.g., "God, I must confess to you that I believe I'll never be able to overcome my fear of life, which means I'll never have the courage to face my responsibilities, which means I'll never find a woman to marry, which means I'll never be able to have sex. Therefore, I watch porn every night and masturbate. But I know that this is Satan's lie. Please show me the truth that You can free me from all this!" Do you see how this young man's sin is tied to the lies he believes about himself, his life, and ultimately God? In this step, the clue that will tell you that you have believed Satan's lies is your negative emotions, e.g., anxiety, depression, frustration, anger, fear, shame, etc. This is God's way of telling us, "You need to come ask Me about this." Instead of living in shame, they need to live in God's forgiveness, 1 John 1:9.

Teach them to talk with God, their God is not in the sky or in a book called the Bible. He resides in them and is their Father, Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:11. Therefore, when they're confused about who they are, who He is, or what their life means, that's when they need to ask Him and listen for His response, Luke 11:1-13. Close each conversation by asking them to pray. If they've never prayed out loud in front of others, they may be reluctant to do it. But encourage them. At first it will be awkward for them, but soon they will see God as their Father and have no problem addressing Him in front of you. Why? Because they will soon experience His salvation; it is real and it will change the way they see God.

Fifth, give them life homework, at the end of each conversation, give them an assignment that connects God's truth to their lives. Remember, the relationship is not teacher/student, but parent/child. So don't just give them a Bible assignment. Give them an interactive Bible assignment that connects God's truth to their life. You're teaching them to apply the Bible not just to study it. Your goal is for the homework to undo the lies Satan taught them about God, themselves, and their life. When you see them again, check the homework: what did they do? How did they react? What went through their mind? If they failed, what should they have done? What was God saying to them in those moments? If they were victorious, make sure they realize that it was God's power that saved them.

Caution: Don't give up on them, those you disciple will fail. But don't give up on them, even if it's been over a year and they're still struggling. How many times has God given up on you? Why does Jesus tell us to forgive seventy times seven? What does Satan want you to do when they fail over and over? How does Jesus see us, when we fail, Luke 7:36-50? But shouldn't they suffer for their sin? Aren't we perpetuating their sin? First, they are suffering. Second, if you give up on them, you're falling for Satan's lies.

III. Conclusion

*And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. "But **I have prayed for you**, that your faith should not fail; and **when** you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."*—Jesus wasn't going to let Satan destroy Peter.