



Until Christ Be Formed In You



The *Perfecting Believers Discipleship* Ministries
(Discipleship: Challenging Believers to Be Complete in Every Way)
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A Word of Understanding About Discipleship

This little paper is just a shorter writing regarding the word “disciple.” I trust it will be helpful as you grow in your discipleship understanding and experience.

Definitions of Discipleship

The word ‘disciple’ is the English form of the Latin word *discipulus*, which is derived from *discere*, which means *to learn*. From this term we expand the meaning to *learner, pupil, [follower], scholar*. These are the same basic meanings of the New Testament Greek word, *mathētēs*. [New Testament scholar, Craig Keener, adds to the description of disciple as one who is memorizing and living according to the teachings of the Master.]

It indeed is one who is *disciplined* in the way of his leader or lord. Jesus adds three more key elements to this basic definition. They are: 1. Total Commitment, 2. Obedience to His Lordship, and 3. Service to the “little people.” So, for the Church of Jesus Christ, discipleship is the process by which we become more capable, committed and competent followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is through the *spiritual disciplines* like daily devotions, fasting, prayer, meditation, church attendance and the reading of the Word of God that we can live the Word in our daily lives. As we also seek to grow through our local churches and the wider fellowship of the believers, we will be well on the way to becoming effective disciples of Jesus Christ. (The above is quoted from an article from Bishop J. W. Macklin, *The Disciple and the Church*.)

Defining a Disciple

A disciple is one who is disciplined in living out the lifestyle and teachings of his or her Master Teacher and Lord.

Some MODERN DAY WORDS for the older word “disciple” would be – fan, supporter, believer, groupie, advocate, devotee, enthusiast and adherent. Most of these words will fit depending upon the context. However, I like the words Supporter, Enthusiast, Believer, Advocate and Adherent.

THREE CORE DEFINITIONS:

What a disciple does and believes.

- ❖ A Disciple – **Embraces** the teaching and lifestyle of his or her teacher.
- ❖ A Disciple – **Assists in Spreading** the teachings of his or her teacher.
- ❖ A Disciple – Is an **Active Adherent** of his or her teacher.

The Goals, Aims and Definitions of Discipleship (A Holistic View)

The Goal of Christian Discipleship

The goal of discipleship (*spiritual formation*) is to foster and provide an environment for the complete maturity of the believer in Christ (*fully equipped — for life*). It aims to make the individual a better **DISCIPLE: Follower, Learner, Adherent, Apprentice, Trainee and Student [FLAATS] of Jesus Christ**. We also assist believers to solidify their commitment and resolve to enjoy a life of spiritual and personal self-mastery.

More simply, discipleship's goal is to **Perfect Disciples (Believers)**

A **Holistic Discipleship** – is an all-inclusive human development growth of spiritual, personal, social and relational disciplines that assist the believer to serve Christ more effectively both in the Church and in the world as God's representatives on Earth.

This holistic view of Christian development sees Christian formation (*discipleship*) as more than only “spiritual” maturity and growth. It also views discipleship formation as the all-pervasive influence of the Holy Spirit empowering the believer at every point of the human condition and concern.

Holistic Scriptures

Jesus' Growth was Holistic – Not Just “Spiritual”

Luke 2:52 - And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

- ❖ *Wisdom = Growth in Knowledge and Experience*
- ❖ *Stature = Physical Maturity*
- ❖ *Favour with God = Spiritual Maturity*
- ❖ *Favour with Man = Social Maturity*

3 John, Verse 2 (NKJV)

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper **in all things** and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

James 1:4 (New International Version, NIV) Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete, not lacking anything**.

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will **in all things grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (More on the Pauline view of discipleship in Section VII.)

Our Spiritual Formation comes from our Lord, Jesus Christ who **fashions, forms, and perfects** us into His likeness and splendid image of purity and excellence. As we grow in Christ we are being transformed spiritually by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ.

This is, indeed, the Christian Spiritual Formation of one's **complete life** (now and forever).