

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

Discipleship 101

Living as an Effective Discipleship – Part 4

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DISCIPLESHIP 101

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His followers (Matt. 28:19-20), “**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; ...**” The command to make disciples applies to **ALL** who follow Jesus, not just to pastors and missionaries.

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“EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP”

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Every Christian has received a spiritual gift which he or she is to use in serving Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; Eph. 4:7-12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Part of the command to love one another involves helping others be what God wants them to be. **That's discipleship.**

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So, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, God wants you to use your gifts to help others become more like Christ.

Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12 make it clear that each Christian is given spiritual gifts according to the Lord's choice. Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14:12).

We are also told in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 and in 1 Corinthians 14:12-13 that it is God (not us) who chooses the gifts. These passages also indicate that not everyone will have a particular gift.

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Effective discipleship is built on a **Godly message, a **Godly manner**, and a **Godly motive**.**

The godly message is the **gospel**; the godly manner is **evident love for others**; and, the godly motive is to **please God from the heart**.

If you're clear on the gospel, evident in your love for others, and doing everything to please God who examines your heart, God will use you to help others grow to be more like Christ.

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Effective discipleship is built on a godly message: the gospel of God.

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In 1 Thessalonians 2 & 3, Paul is defending himself against vicious opponents, perhaps the Jews who drove him out of Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:14-16). They were trying to discredit Paul so that his gospel would be discredited. Paul mentions the gospel in verses 2, 4, 8, and 9 (as well as in 1:5 & 3:2). In verses 2, 8, & 9 he refers to it as “the gospel of God.” Paul didn’t make up the gospel. Rather, it came directly from God, who revealed it to Paul. **To reject the gospel is to reject the living and true God who gave it to us.**

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The gospel is good news for sinners because it promises freely to forgive all the sins of those who believe. As Paul states (Rom. 4:5), “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

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So why does the gospel result in opposition? Why would anyone have a problem with such good news? The Bible is clear that **self-righteous people** hate the gospel because it **confronts their pride**. It takes away all grounds for boasting in our good deeds. The gospel requires that we acknowledge that we are sinners without any claim for heaven. The gospel reveals that my heart is as desperately wicked as that of the worst of sinners. So proud people oppose the humbling message of the gospel.

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Paul was mistreated in Philippi for preaching the gospel, but when he came to Thessalonica, he preached the same message boldly in spite of the opposition (1 Thess. 2:2). We can't compromise the message to win converts.

Effective discipleship rests on the foundation of the gospel revealed to us in God's Word.

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Effective discipleship is built on a godly manner: evident love for people.

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1 Thessalonians 2:7-8: “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”

When people feel the love of Christ through us, they will more likely listen to the gospel that we present.

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He uses “**gentle**” with reference to how the Lord’s bond-servants must relate to others (2 Tim. 2:24-25): “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind [“gentle”] to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”

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It's obvious that Paul had deep feelings for these new converts and he let them know it verbally. Not only did he tell them of his affection for them, but also they had seen it when he was with them. He repeats "you know," "you recall," and "you are witnesses (2:1, 2, 5, 9, 10 & 11). Paul's love for them was evident.

You can't effectively disciple others if you're not truthful about your own failures and struggles.

So, effective discipleship is built on a godly message: the gospel of God; and, on a godly manner: evident love for people.

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Effective discipleship is built on a godly motive: pleasing God from the heart.

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We please God when we seek His glory, not our own.

Paul says (1 Thess. 2:4), “but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.” He adds (1 Thess. 2:6), “nor did we seek glory from men.” Paul lived with a **Godward focus**. He wanted to please and glorify God on the heart level. When he says that he didn’t please men, he doesn’t mean that he was insensitive toward people. He was careful not needlessly to offend others (see 1 Cor. 9:20-22; 10:33). He spoke graciously to people (Eph. 4:29). **But behind his actions toward people was a primary focus to please and glorify God.**

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Pleasing and glorifying God must begin on the heart or thought level, since God **examines our hearts**. We can fool people by putting on a good front when we're in public, but **God looks on our hearts**. When Paul says that he had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, he's referring to his heart before God. Paul's heart was right with God and so God entrusted Paul with the treasure of the gospel.

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To begin at this, gain and maintain a clear conscience before God. As Paul told the Roman governor Felix (Acts 24:16), **“I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”** This means confessing all sins, including sinful thoughts. It means asking forgiveness of those against whom we have sinned. And then, positively, we aim to please God in all respects (Col. 1:10), not so that we look good to others, but so that God looks good through us. **When you walk with that kind of reality and integrity before the Lord, He will use you to disciple others effectively.**

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DISCIPLESHIP ASSESSMENT

https://bwbcirving.org/discipleship_assessment/

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Questions?

References

Material Excerpts From:

Chan, Francis and Platt, David: Multiply: disciples making disciples.
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