

# PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)*

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## Mentors and Disciples

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### Introduction

It is the expectation of the Lord that we all be disciples and mentors. We are discipled first and as we mature we become mentors who disciple others. This is not an optional thing that we can decide to do or not to do. Jesus gave us the command in what we call the Great Commission, but which is really simply the commission of all believers.

Matthew 28:19-20 NASB

- (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus spoke this to His close followers after His resurrection. These are the mentors who are going forth, the ones who will disciple others. They are to go to "all the nations". "Nations" here in the Greek is "ethnos" and basically means "peoples or people groups" and not a political entity that we would call a country or nation. This would make sense since Jesus was opening the door to the Gentiles also and not just the Jews.

The mentors' primary job is to make disciples, not converts or followers. This is an active not a passive process. Once disciples are made the secondary jobs for the mentors begins—baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded. The end result is that the disciple matures and becomes a mentor, duplicating the work in others that was done in him.

### Definition of Being a Disciple

Our modern institutional church system has corrupted the scriptural concept of discipleship. What is typically presented as a "discipleship program" are lessons in denominational doctrine, how to create habits of prayer and reading the Bible, and attending all functions of the Church. While this may make one a good supporter of the denomination, it does little to address the

biblical requirements of discipleship.

Jesus very clearly gave us the process of being a disciple.

**John 8:31-32 NASB** So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue [NKJV=*abide*] in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth [revealed truth] will make you free." [parenthetical added]

The steps are clear and definitive: 1) believe; 2) continue or abide in His word; 3) know the truth; 4) be made free. One becomes a true disciple of Jesus by continuing in His word. This results in one knowing the truth and becoming free. The goal of being a disciple of Jesus is being free. The path to get to freedom is continuing in His word.

## Revealed Truth

Revealed truth is experiential truth—not just *known* by the mind, but *experienced* in the heart and *applied* to your life. Revealed truth is available to anyone who is willing to walk in the Spirit. It is not available to those who bound by the desires of the world system.

**Mark 4:10-12 NASB**

- (10) As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables.
- (11) And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables,
- (12) so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."

In its seed format spiritual truth is hidden from those who are not following after Jesus. To those who are outside of the Kingdom, the Kingdom is a mystery; but, to those who are disciples, the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed. Continuing in His word causes the Holy Spirit to begin to open our understanding bringing forth revealed truth for us to apply to our life. This is what makes us free.

## Make You Free

It is possible to be a believer and not be a disciple. Many of our problems are a result of our failure to "continue in His word". As a consequence, we are not set free but remain in bondage of various types, which prevent us from maturing or from accomplishing the work that the Lord as assigned to us.

Bondage must be broken in our lives if we are to do the Father's will. We must be free in order to be obedient to all that the Lord requires of us. There can be no hindrances binding us to the world or to our self desires that prevent us from fulfilling the Lord's purpose for our lives.

We have a picture of the process of being set free in the description of Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave.

## John 11:43-44 NASB

(43) When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come forth.**"

(44) The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus \*said to them, "**Unbind him, and let him go.**"

This is a physical picture of a spiritual truth. We who are dead in sin are individually called into life by Jesus. However, we come forth from our tombs wrapped in grave clothes—the stinking trappings of our former life. These hinder our walk in our new life. The hands are bound and hinder us from doing the work of the Lord. The feet are bound and hinder us from going where the Lord calls us to go. The face is covered, hindering us from seeing and speaking clearly. Jesus commanded those with Him to loose Lazarus from his wrappings and bindings. He did not do it Himself! Jesus calls us into life but it is the fellow followers of Jesus that help us rid ourselves of the bindings of the former life. This is the primary objective of discipleship—freedom to do what the Lord requires.

## Requirements For Discipleship

The institutional church has given us the idea that there really aren't any requirements for discipleship except for the willingness to attend a few instructional classes. Scripturally this is ridiculous. As described in the aforementioned verses, the first two requirements are easy but they are still requirements—1) believe; 2) continue in His word. As we do this the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal to us some of the other requirements.

Luke 14:26 NASB "**If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.**

Luke 14:27 NASB "**Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

Luke 14:33 NASB "**So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.**

These three verses contain clear requirements—if you don't do this, then you cannot be My disciple. First, the love and desire for the Lord must be the primary focus of our hearts even over those who are closest to us, which includes our family and even ourselves. Second, we must carry our own cross. No one else can do it for us. This is where we die daily to self will and do the Lord's will. Third, we are completely free from the pull of worldly possessions. What we have belongs to the Lord.

## Goals of Discipleship

Besides the preliminary goal of being free, the process of discipleship has several definite end goals.

## Romans 8:29 NASB

(29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

## 2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB

(18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

The true end goal is that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ. Jesus was the "Word made flesh" and His goal is to make the Word flesh in us. Jesus was conformed to the image of the Father. He said that if you had seen Him, you had seen the Father. We are to be so conformed to the image of Jesus, that it could be said that if you have seen us then you have seen Jesus.

This process of conforming to the image of Jesus is the *first goal of discipleship*. This could be summed up in one word: **maturity**.

## John 17:20-23 NASB

(20) "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

(21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

(22) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

(23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Jesus prayed the Father that we all would be one. The goal then is *unity*. He went on to say "...that the world may know that You sent me...". Our unity is a testimony to the world of the Lordship of Jesus.

*Unity* is not *uniformity*. There is diversity within the body, yet we all are directed by the head. No one stands alone; but each stands with the other members of the body.

The *second goal of discipleship* is **unity**. The power of God comes with unity. When the disciples were all together in one accord in the one place in Acts 2:1,2, then the Holy Spirit came like a mighty rushing wind. Later in the chapter (v.14) Peter stands with the eleven (unity is evidenced by the leadership) and preaches his great sermon and about three thousand were added to them. Out of unity came **ministry**, which is the *third goal of discipleship*.

Jesus said in John 15:8 "...bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." What type of fruit are we to bear? God made everything that it should reproduce after its own kind (**Gen. 1:24,25**). You don't plant peas and harvest string beans. Then, the fruit of a disciple would be more disciples. This is the *final goal of discipleship*!

Discipleship produces **maturity**, which produces **unity**, which produces **ministry**, which produces **disciples**. This is the normal order of events as we learn to walk with the Lord. Many times our problem is the fact that we push ourselves or the Institutional Church pushes us into various types of ministry before we have learned maturity and unity. The result is one of confusion, backbiting, paranoia, ineffectiveness and burnout.

## The Mentor's Job

It is the mentor's job to help the believer in becoming a disciple of the Lord. Paul said, "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*" (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul's goal wasn't to make disciples for himself but to lead the believer into being a disciple of Christ. The mentor never makes disciples for himself as he would then be encroaching upon the domain of the Lord. This is where the shepherding movement, the father movement, and other similar discipleship movements have failed.

As Jesus moved on with the Father's business after His baptism, His ministry was expressed in three ways:

1. A public ministry to the multitudes (gift ministry),
2. A teacher/disciple ministry to some,
3. A shepherd/sheep ministry to the twelve.

As we mature in Christ, we become more like Him. Our ministry also becomes more like His ministry. As we then, full of the Spirit, go about the Lord's business, there will be many that we minister to in various ways. Out of those who receive ministry from us, there will be some who will want to learn from us. We become a teacher or a mentor to them and they become disciples of the Lord learning from us. As a mentor, we also become an example of the things that we teach. We take on the responsibility of leadership. Then, we can say with Paul "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*" (1 Cor. 11:1).

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