

Christian Discipleship
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
(May, 2007)

Introduction:

The topic chosen for this study is “Discipleship.” The word “disciple” comes from the Greek word *mathetes* (μαθητής) which means “learner or pupil.” A disciple is a student. In Christianity a disciple is one who is a follower of Christ and a student of the doctrines of Christ. This study will deal with the essence of being a disciple as well as our duty to disciple others.

1. The essence of being a Christian is being a disciple. You cannot be a Christian without being a disciple (a follower of Christ). The work of the Gospel is making disciples. This was the essence of the Great Commission.
Matthew 28:19 – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”
 - a. The KJV doesn’t capture the full meaning of the passage. The word “teach” is the verbal form of the word for disciple. Literally it should be translated, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations. . .”
 - b. The Great Commission concludes:
Matthew 28:20 – “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . .”
In other words, the essence of discipleship is following the teachings of Christ, i.e. the whole counsel of the Word of God.
2. To be a disciple of Christ demands regeneration (transformation).
 - a. Our hearts must be awakened and turned towards Christ. The disciple is taught by Christ through His Word as the Spirit of God illuminates our minds giving us understanding. The Christian will have a passion for Christ.
 - b. The true disciple will have a desire to be taught of Christ through His Word.
Psalms 119:97-99 – “O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.
⁹⁸ Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.”
3. The best way to be taught as a disciple of Christ is to place yourself under the various means of instruction.
 - a. The study and meditation of the Word of God.
 - b. Group Bible studies
 - c. The preaching of the Word of God
 - d. Following the leadership and teaching of the pastors
Philippians 3:17 – “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”
1 Peter 5:1-3 – “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: ² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³ Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

- e. The Christian community as we watch over, encourage, and teach one another
4. There is a presupposition that every Christian will grow as a disciple. Where there is life there is supposed growth. **See Hebrews 5:12 – 6:8**
 5. There is also the presupposition that as we grow we will teach and disciple one another. **Romans 15:14** – “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”
Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
1 Thessalonians 5:11-14 – “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. ¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.”
Hebrews 3:13 – “But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
Hebrews 10:24-25 – “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
 6. Watching over one another is one of the duties of belonging to Trinity Baptist Church.
 - A. Our covenantal duties include:
That, we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish each other, as occasion may require;
 - B. In addition, In the Trinity Baptist Church Constitution, Article I (Membership), Section 3 (Conduct of Membership) we read:
 1. Love one toward another without offense or hypocrisy (John 13:34,35; Rom. 12:9,10; 13:8-10).
 2. To labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:13).
 3. To endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body, that they may grow up to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (I Cor. 14:12,26; Eph. 4:12,29; 2:21,22).
 4. That they all watch over one another for good (Phil. 2:3,4).
 5. That they do pray with and for one another (James 5:16).
 6. That they neglect not the assembling of themselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, and so promote one another's spiritual benefit (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42).
 7. That they unanimously contend for the Faith and Truth once delivered to the saints, in the purity thereof, according to the Holy Scripture (Ps. 93:5; I Cor. 11:2; Jude 3).
 7. Discipleship in the local church setting will only flourish when it is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual love and fellowship.

Supplement

Prepared in answer to the question –

“What can we do as a church to improve in the area of discipleship?”

1. How can we improve in the area of discipleship in our church?
 - A. When we ask this question the danger is to look outside of ourselves – When addressing weaknesses in a church the tendency is always to look at what others need to do. The question needs to be, “How can each of us help one another to grow in Christian maturity?”
 - B. With this in mind, all comments need to be limited to statements of personal testimony – ways *you* have been deficient in the past and ways *you* might improve in the future.
 - C. You need to understand how important *you* are in this church. Every time we add a new member our church changes. Every member adds a new dimension, new gifts, new areas of service.
 - D. Every new member will either weaken or strengthen the church.
 - a. Your sin will have a negative affect upon the whole church.
Joshua 7:1 – “But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”
 - b. Your actions can also have a positive affect upon the church
 - c. Each of us should ask the personal question, “Is this church strengthened by me being a part of it. Would my absence weaken the church?”
2. I’m going to make some pastoral suggestions – some positive admonitions of how we can strengthen our church in discipleship and then you ask yourself how you can improve in these areas. We’ll look again at Article I, Section 3 of our Constitution (see above).
 - A. The first great need is Prayer (#5)**
 - a. Pray about your own relationship with Christ.
 - (1) How many of you believe you are as close to Christ as you could be or should be?
How many of you have an intense hunger and thirst to be nearer to Christ?
 - (2) If you were starving or dying of thirst how much energy would you give to seek out the life giving sustenance?
Psalm 42:1 – “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”
 - If you have a hunger for Christ you need to give great energy to satisfying that hunger.
 - If you do not have a hunger you need to cry out to God in repentance. The things of this world cloud our eyes from the glory of God and hinder our communion with Him.
1 John 1:6-7 – “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:
⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

- Paul stated that nothing can compare with the knowledge of Christ.
Phil. 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,
- (3) Commit yourself to prayer for yourself
- That you might have greater passion and zeal for Christ.
 - That your life might be consumed with His glory – that His majesty and splendor might so captivate your affections that sin would be most vile and that the things of this world would become less and less significant.
 - That you might have a greater love for the brethren (#2). That you will have a greater concern for their spiritual wellbeing. That you will be willing to sacrifice for their wellbeing.
- b. Commit yourself to prayer for the brethren. That they might grow with you in their passion for Christ.
- c. Pray that you might be a person of prayer. That constant prayer will characterize your life. We need to develop the practice of praying immediately with our brothers when they share a need. We need to spend more time in corporate prayer. Invite people to your house for prayer.

2. **Second, we need to make a greater effort in building relationships**

- A. Invite people to your home for a meal -- Not just the people you are close to but those you don't know as well, those you may feel you don't have as much in common with. These are wonderful expressions of love (#1) and build unity (#2). Our unity with each other comes through our union with Christ. We need to discover how much we have in common in Christ.
- B. Strong relationships in the church create opportunities for teaching, encouraging, and admonishing (#3-4)
- C. Only strong relationships will provide the ability to confess your sins with one another. Only strong relationships will allow one brother or sister to correct and admonish the other in love. Only strong relationships will provide encouragement and edification as we walk together in love.

3. **Third, we need to take advantage of corporate times of study for growth and edification (#6)**

- A. This includes Sunday opportunities of Sunday School, DT, and worship.
- B. It includes Wednesday night gatherings for prayer and preaching – are you strengthening or weakening the church by your actions?
- C. Our two outside group study times are of great importance – Men's Study and Ladies' Study.
- a. They provide instruction for edification.
 - b. They provide opportunities to express personal weaknesses and offer encouragement to each other.
 - c. It builds relationships and fellowship.

- d. Each of us needs to recognize our importance in these meetings. The excuses people offer up reveal their lack of understanding of the place each of us have in the church. Each of us has a duty to build up and help one another even in the face of personal sacrifice.
- I don't have time – reveals a self-centered understanding of your importance in the church. Love and concern for the brethren sometimes demands sacrifice. Besides, it's only one day per month.
 - I don't need to attend this study. I won't learn anything – reveals a self-centered understanding of your importance in the church. How will your attendance help others?
 - Some of the discussion doesn't seem very mature or "spiritual" – If you are more mature your presence is needed all the more. Such statements often reveal a sinful spiritual pride.