

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Biblical Foundations of Discipleship

How to multiply disciples according to
Jesus' transformative discipleship model

MÓNICA
MASTRONARDI



Biblical Foundations of Discipleship
A book in the School of Leadership series
Christian Discipleship Speciality

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NAZARENE DISCIPLESHIP
INTERNATIONAL
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Presentation

The book series: Leadership School, has been designed with the purpose of providing a tool to the church for the formation, qualification and training of its members in order to integrate them actively in Christian service, according to the gifts and calling (vocation) they have received from their Lord.

Each book provides the study material for a course in the Leadership School program sponsored by the Spanish-speaking Theological Institutions of the Mesoamerica Region of the Church of the Nazarene. These are: NBI (Nazarene Bible Institute) (Coban, Guatemala); NTS (Nazarene Theological Seminary) (Guatemala City); SENAMEX (Mexico City, Mexico); SENDAS (Nazarene Seminary of the Americas), (San Jose, Costa Rica); SND (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) and SETENAC (Havana, Cuba). A good number of the leaders of these institutions (rectors, directors, vice-rectors and directors of decentralized studies) actively participated in the design of the program.

The Leadership School has five Basic Courses, common to all ministries, and six Specialized Courses for each ministry, at the end of which the Theological Institution grants the student a certificate (or diploma) in Specialized Ministry.

The general objective of the Leadership School is: “To collaborate with the local church in the equipping of the “saints for the work of the ministry”, strengthening in them a solid biblical theological knowledge and developing them in the exercise of their gifts for service in their local congregation and in society”. The specific objectives of this program are threefold:

- To develop the ministry gifts of the local congregation.
- To multiply ministries of service in the church and community.
- To awaken the vocation to diversified professional ministry.

The objective of this Specialty entitled “Christian Discipleship” is to train those who have gifts for discipleship and the desire to participate in the Great Commission, but do not currently have a professional ministerial education. The lessons in these six books have been written by missionaries, pastors and lay people throughout the Mesoamerica Region and it is the desire of the authors that each student will receive an enriched vision of the Great Commission and the training to disciple others for Christ. We desire that God will be glorified through these courses and that each student will grow in their preparation and service as an effective worker in His work.

We thank Dr. Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández for her dedication as General Editor of the project, the Regional Ministry Coordinators and the team of writers and designers who collaborated in the publication of these books. We also thank the teachers who will share these materials. They will make a difference in the lives of thousands of people throughout Mesoamerica.

Finally, we cannot fail to thank Dr. Rubén Fernández, Coordinator of Education and Pastoral Development for the impetus given to the publication of these materials, and Dr. L. Carlos Sáenz, MAR Regional Director, for his ongoing support in this task, the fruit of his conviction of the priority need for a church that is integrally equipped.

We pray for God’s blessing on all the disciples whose lives and Christian service will be enriched by these books.

Rev. Monte Cyr

Discipleship Ministries Coordinator

Mesoamerica Region

What Is the School of Leadership?

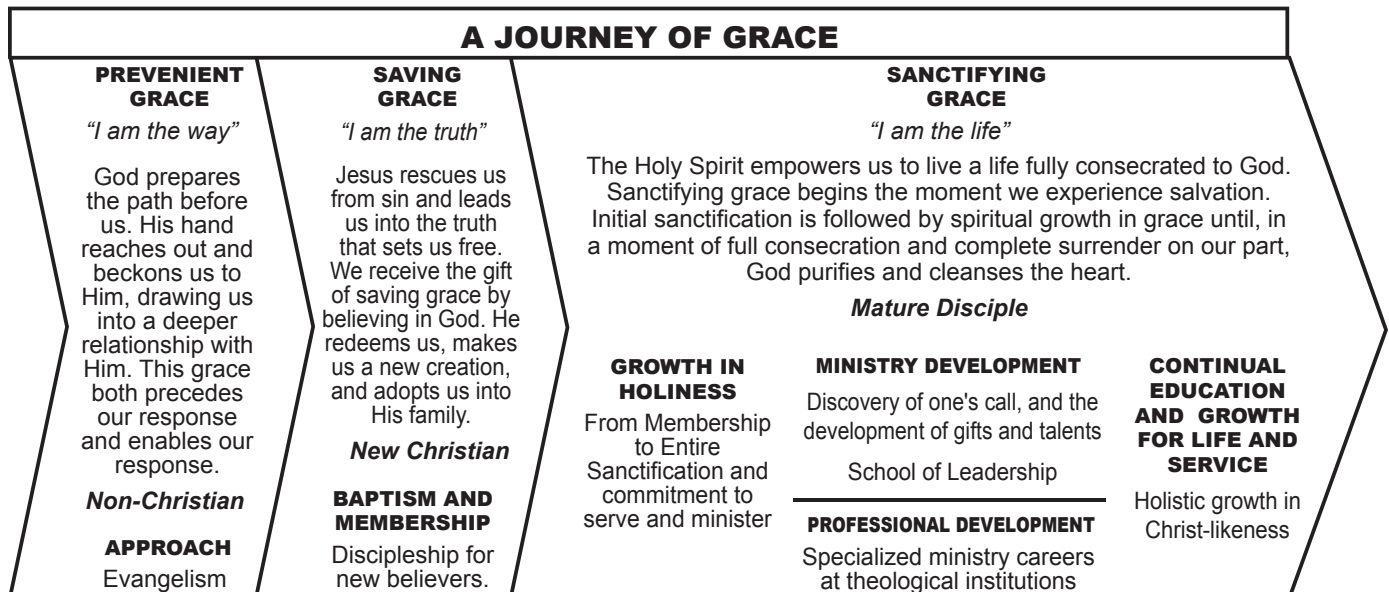
The **School of Leadership** is an educational program for lay ministry in different specialties to engage in the mission of the local church. This program is administered by the Theological Institutions of the Church of the Nazarene in the Mesoamerica Region and taught both at these institutions and in the local churches enrolled in the program.

Who Can Benefit from the School of Leadership?

It is for all the members of the Church of the Nazarene who have participated in the Saving Grace and Sanctifying Grace - Growth in Holiness parts of A Journey of Grace discipleship program, and who, with all their heart, wish to discover their gifts and serve God in His work.

The Plan - A Journey of Grace

In the Church of the Nazarene, we believe that making disciples in the image of Christ in the nations is the foundation of the missionary work of the church and the responsibility of its leadership (Ephesians 4:7-16). For this, at all levels of the church, the implementation of progressive discipleship is promoted as “A Journey of Grace” (John 14: 6), a lifestyle of discipleship. The School of Leadership is part of the “Sanctifying Grace - Ministry Development” section, and is designed for those who have gone through the “Prevenient Grace,” “Saving Grace,” and “Sanctifying Grace - Growth in Holiness” sections of the discipleship path.



The work of discipleship is continuous and dynamic; therefore, the disciple never stops growing in the likeness of his Lord. This growth, when healthy, occurs in all dimensions: the individual dimension (spiritual growth), the corporate dimension (joining the congregation), the holiness in life dimension (progressive transformation of our being and doing according to the model of Jesus Christ) and the service dimension (investing our lives in ministry).

For more information about A Journey of Grace, visit: www.mesonaz.org/journey

Dr. Monica Mastronardi de Fernandez
Managing Editor, The School of Leadership Book Series



How Do I Use This Book?

This book contains eight lessons of the School of Leadership program, along with activities and final evaluation of the course.

How are the contents of this book organized?

Each of the eight lessons of this book contains the following:

- **Objectives:** These are the learning objectives the student is expected to understand at the end of the lesson.
- **Main Ideas:** A summary of the key teachings of the lesson.
- **Development of Lesson:** This is the largest section because it is the development of the contents of the lesson. The lessons have been written so that the book can be the teacher, and for that reason the contents have been written in a dynamic form and in simple language with contemporary ideas.
- **Notes and Comments:** The information in the margins is intended to clarify terms and provide notes that complement or extend the content of the lesson.
- **Questions:** Sometimes questions are included in the margin that the teacher can use to introduce or reinforce a lesson topic.
- **What did we learn?:** The box at the end of the lesson development section provides a brief summary of the lesson.
- **Activities:** This is a page at the end of each lesson that contains learning activities, for individuals or groups, on the subject studied. The estimated time for implementation in class is 20 minutes.
- **Final evaluation of the course:** This is the last page of the book and once completed the student must remove it from the book and hand it in to a course instructor. The final evaluation should take about 15 minutes.

How long is each course?

The courses are designed for 12 hours of class over 8 ninety-minute sessions. Each institution and each church or local theological study center will coordinate days and times of the classes. Within this hour and a half the teacher or the teachers should include time for the activities contained in the book.

What is the role of the student?

The student is responsible for the following:

1. Enroll on time for the course.
2. Buy the book and study each lesson before class time.
3. Arrive for class on time.
4. Participate in class activities.
5. Participate in practical ministry in the local church outside of class.
6. Complete and submit the final evaluation to the teacher.

What is the role of the teacher of the course?

The professors and teachers for the School of Leadership courses are pastors and laity committed to the mission and ministry of the church and preferably have experience in the ministry they teach. The Director and/or the School of Leadership at the local church (or theological institution) invites their participation and their functions are the following:

1. Be well prepared by studying the book's content and scheduling the use of class time. When studying the lesson, you should have on hand the Bible and a dictionary. Although the lessons

are written using simple language, it is recommended that you “translate” what you consider difficult in order to help the students understand. In other words, use terms that they can better understand.

2. Ensure that the students are studying the material in the book and achieving the learning objectives.
3. Plan and accompany students in the activities of ministerial practice. The local pastor and the director of the respective ministry must schedule these activities. These activities should not take away from class time.
4. Take daily attendance and grades in the class report form. The final average will be the result demonstrated by the student in the following activities:
 - a. Class work
 - b. Participation in ministerial practice outside of class
 - c. Final evaluation
5. At the end of the course, collect the evaluation sheets and hand them in with the form “Class Report” to the local School of Leadership director. Do this after totaling the averages and verifying that all data is complete on the form.
6. Professors and teachers should not add tasks or reading assignments apart from the contents of the book. They should be creative in the design of the learning activities and in planning ministry activities outside the classroom according to the reality of their local church and its context.

How do I teach a class?

We recommend using a 90-minute class session as follows:

- **5 minutes:** Review the topic of the previous lesson and pray together.
- **30 minutes:** Review and discuss the lesson. We recommend using an outline, chalkboard, cardboard or other available materials, using dynamic learning activities and visual media such as graphics, drawings, objects, pictures, questions, assigning students to submit parts of the lesson, and so on. We do not recommend lecturing or having the teacher reread the lesson content.
- **5 minutes:** Break either in the middle of class or when it is convenient.
- **20 minutes:** Work on activities in the book. This can be done at the beginning, middle or end of the review, or you can complete the activities as you proceed in accordance with the issues as it relates to them.
- **20 minutes:** Discussion about the students’ ministry practice that they currently do and that they will do. At the beginning of the course you will need to present the schedule to the students so that they can make arrangements to attend the ministry practice. In the classes when the students discuss their ministry practice, the conversation should be focused on what they learned, including their successes and their errors, as well as the difficulties they encountered.
- **10 minutes:** Prayer for the issues arising from the practice (challenges, people, problems, goals, gratitude for the results, among others).

How do I implement the final course evaluation?

Allocate 15 minutes of time during the last class meeting for the course evaluation. If necessary, students may consult their books and Bibles. Final evaluations are designed to be an activity to reinforce what was learned in class and not a repetition of the contents of the book. The purpose of this assessment is to measure the understanding and evaluation of the student concerning the class topics, their spiritual growth, their progress in the commitment to the mission of the church and their progress in ministerial experience.

Ministry Practice Activities

The following are suggested activities for out-of-class ministry practice. Included in the following list are several ideas to help teachers, pastors, local School of Leadership director and local ministry directors. From these, you can choose the ones that best fit the contextual reality and ministry of the local church or they can be replaced by others according to your needs and possibilities.

It is recommended to have no less than three ministry activities per course. You can have the entire class work on the same project or assign tasks in groups according to their interests, gifts and abilities. Involve students in a variety of ministry experiences that are new to them.

Suggested ministry activities for the Biblical Foundations of Discipleship course

1. Disciple an adult with the New Life in Christ book for 6 weeks or a youth with the High Voltage Book.
2. Serve as an assistant teacher in one of the children's classes for 6 weeks.
3. Organize a mini-camp (overnight) or sleepover for youth in order to talk to them about the importance of being disciples of Christ, and enroll youth in the local church's discipleship courses.
4. Organize a weekend "Vacation Bible School" for children, with the motto: Disciples of Jesus.
5. Organize a collection, sales or paid volunteer work (such as washing cars, etc.), in order to raise funds to equip the NDI team with T-shirts. The T-shirt should have a design related to discipleship or to our mission of making disciples.
6. Prepare a special worship service to talk about the importance of discipleship to the congregation and promote the discipleship groups in the local church.
7. Organize a special celebration and graduation activity for new disciples who have completed a level of discipleship.



LESSON 1

Discipleship and Integral Salvation

Biblical Foundations of Discipleship

Objectives

- To define disciple.
- To understand the scope of salvation.
- To identify the agents of God's mission.

Main Ideas

- Human disobedience brought misfortune, pain and death to all living beings, and its devastating implications extended to all creation.
- "Integral salvation" reaches the whole life of the human being.

Introduction

The word "disciple" is the translation of the Greek word *mathetes* which means "taught, trained". In its verbal voice *mantháno*, it implies the action of learning or the desire to be instructed.

The Hebrew word most similar in meaning to the Greek *mathetes* is *lamad*, which literally means to become accustomed or familiar with something, to learn. It is used on a few occasions, referring to the process of learning, the latter being understood as the transmission of obedience to God's law, the resulting demonstration of God's love and personal acceptance of the divine will. It is Isaiah who goes further by understanding that the purpose of God's teaching is not merely to achieve isolated actions in obedience to the law, but rather to reorient the entire life of the individual.

In the Old Testament, there is no word that describes the relationship between a disciple and his teacher in the style of Jesus. The closest are the communities of "disciples of prophets" which appeared in the ninth century B.C. The prophet was considered a guide or father who taught the doctrine, and the students were called "servants" (1 Kings 19:29, 2 Kings 4:12, Ex. 24:13). Examples are the disciples of Elisha (2 Kings 4:38 and 6:2).

In late Judaism, the rabbis played the role of wise mediators between the "Torah" and the learners. In the time of Jesus, whoever wished to know the Word of God sought out a teacher of the law or rabbi, who taught them until he considered that they had acquired sufficient knowledge, and then he dismissed them. (Gabner-Haider, 1975, p. 407-410).

Discipleship in the New Testament

In this section, we will define "discipleship" from the New Testament.



For the New Testament authors, "*discipleship*" has a different meaning. Its objective is to know God's will for the life of every human being and to live within that revealed will.

For Juan Carlos Ortiz, a disciple is: "one who learns to live the life that his master lives and little by little teaches others to live the life that he lives." Therefore, discipleship is not communication of knowledge or information,

it is communication of life. That is why Jesus said, *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life”*. (Jn. 6:63) (1978, p.121).

In the New Testament, Jesus is always the means to know God’s will (Jn. 14:6). The idea of discipleship cannot be divorced from a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord, as Briscoe explains:

“Any definition of discipleship that does not incorporate the ideas of personal relationship with Christ, consecration to his service, and willingness to live under his authority is by definition insufficient” (1990, p.20).

In John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the word disciple (*mathetes*) with three connotations. First, in John 8:31-32, Jesus affirms that a disciple is a Christian who abides in the Word of God continuously: *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”* Second, a disciple is willing to give his life for others: *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”* (Jn. 15:13). Finally, a disciple is one who remains close to Christ by bearing fruit. In John 13:34-35, He says: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

“Any definition of discipleship that does not incorporate the ideas of personal relationship with Christ, consecration to his service, and a willingness to live under his authority is by definition insufficient.” (Briscoe)

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6).

The origin of God’s restorative mission

In this section, we will study how God’s mission originated.



The origin of the word “mission” in the Old Testament is the Hebrew term *“derek”*, which is mentioned in 1 Samuel 15:18, 20 and means: a path laid out, specific instructions to be fulfilled, an anticipated plan, a way to be followed, a specific direction, trail, course, a singular way of doing something (Strong, 2002, p. 31).

The origin of God’s mission is found in the creation verses. The Lord first sends humans with the command to *“be fruitful and multiply”* (Gen. 1:22 and 2:3), making them co-participants in the mission of transmitting life. But we should not understand fruitfulness only in the sense of numerical multiplication, but as a continuous development of the potential and beauty with which God has endowed them; beauty that is a radiance of the Creator’s magnificence.

To this mission is added another, that of *“tilling and guarding”* all creation. With this command, God creates humans as His representative, but not before warning them not to abuse this privilege, but to exercise it in God’s favor and for the well-being of all creation (Gen. 1:28-30, 2:15-17).

For this special mission, God endowed human beings with special and unique abilities (Eph. 4:24, Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18; Mark 10:6; Matt. 5:45-48).

God created humans to be fully happy. Before sin, the human couple knew no suffering, their joy was perfect and pure.

For John Wesley, the essence of the happiness of man and woman was found in their knowledge of God and of their own faculties, with which they obeyed Him by serving other creatures. In the garden of Eden, order, beauty and harmony among living beings was the source of pleasure for the human beings (Bryant, 1982: 162).

The obedience of the man and woman to the mission entrusted by God would bring blessing to all of the creatures that had been placed under their care; but disobedience brought misfortune, pain and death to all living beings, and its devastating implications extended to all creation. Man and woman, by rebelling against God, damaged the original balance of nature and the coexistence among human beings, endangering the existence of life on the entire planet. Humans had ceased to be the lord of creation and God has ceased to be the Lord of the human beings.

In the midst of chaos, God provides hope through His plan of salvation, and with patience, He carries it out throughout human existence. Just as God sent Himself to create the universe, He then sent Himself to restore that universe mortally wounded by sin. God, in His infinite love, took pity on people and imposed on Himself the mission of rescuing and restoring them, educating them, so that they would align themselves with His purposes. It was God who first crossed the barriers to approach mankind who had strayed from the original plan, in order to help them find again the path to happiness. The need to live in harmonious communication with God and the rest of creation is inherent in the nature of human beings, who will only reach fulfillment when they return to the Creator's original plan.

God's restorative mission encompasses the spiritual world as well as the material world; both worlds are His creation and are included in His plans of salvation. This integral approach to God's mission in recent times... "has helped to rescue the holistic dimension of salvation by affirming that God's mission expresses His love for all creation and that He desires His love to be manifested in every corner and creature of this world" (Segura, 2011, p. 43).

Integral salvation in the ministry of Jesus

In this section we will study integral salvation in Jesus.



In the announcement of Jesus' birth, the purpose of His coming is affirmed: He came to bring salvation (Mt. 1:21; Lk. 2:11). It is important to understand what the salvation that Jesus brought consists of, because the proclamation of this salvation is what He then entrusted to His Church. This concept of salvation comes from the Old Testament and refers to both spiritual and material or temporal evils. Christ "became flesh" in Jesus to bring this type of salvation. That is why it is not correct to speak of salvation in merely spiritual terms.

Jesus came to be the model of the restorative life that God wants to impart to us. He not only proclaimed salvation, He lived it. For Jesus, living salvation meant positively affecting the lives of all those He encountered along the way. When Jesus healed, He did not just heal organic or mental illness. That is

Holistic:
From the Greek *holos*, which means everything or something whole. It is an adjective that indicates that it encompasses the totality, the whole, everything that is related.

why the authors of the Gospels use the term *sozo*, which has generally been translated as “to save”, but its connotation is broader, since it describes the process of restoration, where God frees people from the bonds that degrade their lives, to guide them to live life to the fullest. (Mt. 9:21; 27:42; Mk. 5:23).

This complete restoration initiated by Jesus Christ is known as “integral salvation”, since its scope affects, in the first place, the entire life of all those who are reached by it and, in addition, they will transform their contexts. In this process of salvation, God restores his image in every man, woman, and child who has been tarnished by sin. This image of God incarnated in human life is what we can fully contemplate in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15; 2:9; 3:10; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Heb. 1:3; Phil. 2:6).

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”
(Luke 2:11.

The agents of God’s mission

Finally, we will see who are the ones sent to carry out this mission.



The members of the early church understood that they had been sent and anointed to be instruments of God’s mission. They marched together, serving God, putting into practice what they had learned from Jesus’ model (Acts 2:42, 4:32-34, 10: 36-38).

This same mission of integral salvation is what God has entrusted to His church today. Lewis explains: “God has entrusted his people with the greatest task in human history. We are the agents of his kingdom and have the responsibility to carry the good news of freedom, through Christ, to the ends of the earth. We do not know why He has chosen people as His agents. Perhaps His angels could have done it better and faster. But we suspect that God has entrusted us with this mission because, at the same time, the process of its fulfillment is essential for our growth and for our maturity. History and experience teach that the church that does not spread the gospel withers and dies. Likewise, the believer who does not learn to focus their attention on the needs of others, nor to minister to meet these needs, remains perpetually immature.” (1990, p. 86-87).

Lozada and Angulo describe the role of the disciple of Christ as a co-actor in the establishment of the Kingdom: “Entering the kingdom...represents becoming an agent or co-actor in the establishment of that kingdom. It implies a transformation of the person and his values through obedience to the commandments of Jesus... God himself through the Holy Spirit will be accompanying and enabling his people so that they can be faithful to the call to be co-actors with God in the drama of the restoration of all creation (Jn. 14:15-17,26; 16:13; Heb. 8:8-13; Phil. 2:13). ... There is no place for observers in this process” (1995, p. 234).

“In the people of God there is no place for inactive or passive members.”

In the New Testament, the process of preparation to be an instrument of God’s mission includes:

1. Recognizing that God is the starting point and ideologist of the mission. The service of the church and of each one of its members must contribute to this work of integral restoration that God is developing in His creation.

“The Christian is the person who works for God and people; first, because they desire it with all their heart, and, second, because they are compelled by the love of God, which constrains them.”

(Barclay, 1993, p.136).

God is the designer of the mission, He is the One who chooses and trains His chosen ones, and who gives the norms and directions to His envoys. God makes all of us, His children, co-participants in His mission.

2. God sends all His children of all ages to serve in a specific work within His global plan. He gives instructions to His envoys, or sent ones, by means of a precise assignment, a strategy, or a plan of action. To achieve the objectives of the mission requires teamwork between the Creator and His envoys, and they apply their creativeness for the best accomplishment of the mission.
3. The envoys must be anointed before beginning their service in the mission. The Holy Spirit is the One who grants the capacities according to the characteristics of the service to be performed and the One who anoints the envoys. The church participates through the discipleship and training of the envoys.

According to what has been written up to this point, God is the designer of the mission, He is the ONE who chooses and trains His chosen ones, and the One who gives the norms and directions to His envoys. We are all sent to participate in this integral mission. God makes all of us, His children, co-participants in His mission.

The church of the true disciples of Christ must be a transformer of its context, in the same way that Jesus transformed his context. This is what true “Christian” discipleship is all about, restoring people’s lives to the image of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that out of love for their Redeemer, they become restorers of other people’s lives. In God’s plan, restoration includes the total life of the human being and also the environment in which their life develops.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

After the fall of the human race into sin, God set Himself the mission of restoring and leading every human being to live in fullness of life, according to His original plan. Jesus came to fulfill God’s plan, being a model of life and mission to His church. Christian” discipleship consists of restoring the integral life of people to the image of Christ, so that they, in turn, may be instruments of God’s mission.

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write in your own words a definition of discipleship.

2. Based on what you have studied in this lesson, indicate whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

- Discipleship is limited to teaching Christian doctrines.
- A disciple must progressively change “all” of his life.
- Being a Christian implies being a collaborator in God’s mission.
- The pastor is the main model of mission for the members of the church.
- Through the process of discipleship, the image of God is restored.
- The responsibility to make disciples is only for the leaders of the church.
- The integral mission embraces all living beings, the spiritual world as well as the material world.
- The church is the designer of the mission.
- A church that does not make disciples withers and dies.
- God’s mission begins with the birth of Jesus.

3. Think for a moment about the way you were discipled when you began in the Christian life. Do you believe that this discipleship guided you in the total restoration that God wants to do in each one of his sons and daughters? In what way was this objective fulfilled or not?

4. According to the meaning of “integral salvation,” what should we improve in the way we make disciples?



LESSON 2

Discipleship and the Kingdom of God

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To understand that Jesus came to reign in our lives.
- To recognize the breadth of the Kingdom of God.
- To appreciate the values that distinguish the disciples of Christ.

Main Ideas

- The kingdom that came with Christ is for everyone and for all nations.
- Belonging to Christ's kingdom requires total life commitment.
- The values of this kingdom are eternal.

The kingdom of God came with Jesus

In this section we will study that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God.



Matthew 18:3:
"And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

Since Old Testament times, the prophets had anticipated that the Messiah would establish the eternal kingdom of God. For example, Jeremiah 23:5 says: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus' ministry, in his message announced that this promised kingdom was close. In expectation of the coming of the Messiah, people had to prepare their lives, repent of their sins and forsake them. In Matthew 3:2, we can read a summary of his preaching: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near". In John the Baptist's announcement, it was clear that a life of holiness was the essential requirement to be part of this kingdom.

Contrary to the expectations of some of Jesus' contemporaries, He did not establish a political kingdom in Israel, but sowed the seeds of a new kingdom that would spread to the nations through His disciples.

In Jesus' message, there is much teaching about this new kingdom that He came to establish, especially in the parables. In Mark 10:15 He says: "Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." In Matthew 6:33 we read: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." In the model prayer that Jesus taught He says: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

The decision to be part of God's kingdom is personal and individual. No one can make it for us. This is a kingdom that belongs to God and is based on His laws and His values. God is the One who sets the rules for entering and remaining in it. That is why the attitude of the aspirants to this kingdom must be humble, as if they were a child (Mt. 18:3). Furthermore, it must be intensely desired, that is, this kingdom is for those who long for a real change, those who are willing to leave everything else in the background, even renouncing their own life, to receive the blessings offered by this kingdom (Mk. 10:21).

“And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’” (Matthew 18:3)

Contrary to the expectations of some of Jesus’ contemporaries, He did not establish a political kingdom in Israel, but sowed the seeds of a new kingdom that would spread to the nations through His disciples. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 13:33: *“He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.’”*

This kingdom must grow, in the first place, in each one of the disciples. The decision to belong to the kingdom of God implies a radical change in life. The gateway is repentance from sin, followed by the decision to follow Jesus Christ as his disciple. God responds by cleansing our sins, which are washed away with the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross and gives us a new life, in which we can grow in a personal relationship with our God.

From there, a process of transformation begins, which changes the way we think, speak, act and treat others; it is an integral change of each person, which is directed by the Holy Spirit, to align their will with the holy will of God. It is these transformed lives that, collaborating with the Holy Spirit, expand the kingdom of God to their communities, serving others with their gifts and talents.

The kingdom of God is for all nations

In this section, we will see that the kingdom of God has a global reach.



Jesus always had in mind that His mission should reach all peoples. It is for this reason that Jesus rejected the easy way to the kingdom proposed to Him by Satan in Matthew 4:8-10: *“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”*

If Jesus accepted Satan’s offer, He would not fulfill the objective of His ministry, which was to disciple men and women who would be His instruments to bring the kingdom of God to all the families of the earth.

Therefore, one of His great challenges was to bring the disciples out of the ethnocentrism in which they had been educated. Jesus condemned the spirit of Jewish proselytism. He taught that salvation is for all people, and that in His kingdom, all who wish to enter, Jews and non-Jews, are welcome: *“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 8: 11-12).*

Ethnocentrism:

It is the tendency to consider one’s own culture as superior to the customs, traditions and values of other social groups.

Proselytism:

Refers to the activity carried out by a person, institution, political group or social group, among others, to convince other people to join or support their ideas, beliefs or objectives.

Author Jonathan Lewis explains that in the Gospels, we see Jesus' purpose for His kingdom to have a global expansion: "It was because of this universal interest that He took advantage of ministering to the Gentiles at every opportunity, with the idea of breaking down the prejudices that were deeply rooted in the disciples" (1990, p. 72-73).

In His mission, Jesus always kept in mind Israel and the Gentile nations, which can be seen in Luke 10:1 with the sending of the seventy: "*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*" Symbolically the twelve disciples represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the seventy symbolize the Gentile nations. This number seventy has its basis in the Old Testament in Genesis 10, where the descendants of Noah, who are the basis of the new mankind, represent seventy persons. These seventy were sent on a training work, in preparation for a mission to the whole world (H. Cornel, quoted in Lewis, 1990, p.67).

*Matthew 24:14:
"And this gospel of
the kingdom will be
preached in the whole
world as a testimony to
all nations, and then the
end will come."*

However, Jesus' purpose would not be set in motion until after His death and resurrection. That is why during His incarnation we see that His ministry was limited to the Jews. In God's plans, within the history of salvation which began with Israel in the Old Testament, there would come a time when God would provide for the salvation of the heathen. During Jesus' lifetime, that time had not yet come.

Before the salvation of the nations could be possible, two things had to happen. One, salvation would be offered first to the house of Israel, and two, the lamb provided by God would be slain (Mk. 10:45, 14:24). That is why the Great Commission does not occur until the resurrection of the Lord (Gonzalez, 1970, p.34).

Discipleship: Jesus' missional strategy

We will now study Jesus' fundamental strategy for expanding His kingdom.



In the Great Commission, Jesus Christ established discipleship as the main strategy for the expansion of His kingdom in human hearts.

As we saw in the previous point, Jesus Christ was aware that he could not finish this universal mission by Himself in His short time of incarnation. For this purpose, He taught His disciples and charged the early church with the mission of continuing to make and multiply disciples. In the Great Commission, He established discipleship as the main strategy for the propagation of His kingdom in human hearts: "*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*" (Mt. 28:18-20)

Jesus Christ successfully demonstrated the usefulness of discipleship as a strategy for guiding people on the path to holiness of life. The process of discipleship is essential so that the image of God can be restored in human beings. Authors Lozada and Angulo summarize the role of Jesus Christ in this restoration: "In the process of restoring all things to God, the restoration of His image in us plays a fundamental role. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who "knew no sin," He did not experience in any way in His human nature that distortion of the image of God. The Bible proclaims that He, Jesus Christ, is the image of God (Col. 1:15; 2:9; 3:10; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Heb. 1:3; Phil. 2:6). To Him we can direct our lives as a model or paradigm for our pilgrimage in the restoration process" (1995, p.192).

The strategy of disciple-making, in the relational form of teacher-pupil, as Jesus did it, has no precedent in history prior to or contemporary with His ministry. Robert Coleman explains: "The natural informality of Jesus' method of teaching contrasted markedly with the formal, almost scholastic procedure of the scribes. These religious teachers of His time insisted that their disciples strictly follow certain rituals and intellectual formulas, which distinguished them from others. Jesus, on the other hand, only asked His disciples to follow Him. The Master did not communicate knowledge to them in the form of laws and dogmas, but through the living and pulsating personality of One who stood by them. His disciples distinguished themselves, not by outward conformity to certain rituals, but by remaining with Him, and thus participating in His doctrine" (Jn. 18:19) (1964, p. 29-30).

Jesus' purpose in discipleship was not to teach respect for certain laws or norms, or to practice certain religious rituals. The kingdom of God was to be incarnated in the life of each of His disciples. Jesus expected them to follow His example of service and manifest to others the first fruits of this kingdom that is to come in fullness, when at the end of time, all power and authority will be given to Jesus Christ, crowning Him King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14).

Every person who wants to be part of His kingdom must be willing to be discipled and to serve the Lord of that kingdom, Jesus Christ, by discipling others.

We are all valuable in the kingdom of God

In this section, we will learn that Jesus founded the church, integrating everyone as equals.



The purpose of Jesus' discipleship process was to organize His Church, His redeemed people. At this point, it is important to emphasize that although initially this group was reduced to a dozen men, later it grew to form a community. This community had to learn to live under the laws of the kingdom, and that is why Jesus took great care that its members learned to treat each other as equals.

According to Matthew 28:18-20, For what purpose did Jesus empower His disciples?

Genesis 1:27:
"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

*Matthew 13:33:
“He told them still
another parable: “The
kingdom of heaven is
like yeast that a woman
took and mixed into
about sixty pounds of
flour until it worked all
through the dough.””*

Woman was created by God to be co-administrator with man in Creation (Gen. 1:27-28). God did not create her as an inferior being, but this place was given to her by man because of sin. Jesus, in spite of all the hurdles and misinterpretations of His accusers, had the purpose of vindicating woman as a coparticipant of the image of God, making her His disciple and collaborator in the restorative ministry of humanity.

Jesus’ effort to ensure that women and children were not only admitted as His disciples, but also that they were valued and considered with the same rights and opportunities as adult men (Lk. 8:1-3), is admirable. In the case of women, there are many examples in the Gospels of how Jesus intentionally strove to integrate them into the community of disciples at a time when they had been stripped of many of their rights by men.

The fact that Jesus treated women as people capable of understanding theological issues was totally revolutionary for his time. In the parables, Jesus illustrates the principles of the kingdom with jobs that were relegated to women, such as baking bread (the leaven, Matt. 13:33), mending an old garment (Matt. 9:16), spinning and weaving (Matt. 6:28-30), widows (Matt. 18:3, Mark 12:43), the mill where two women are grinding (Matt. 24:41), lighting lamps and cleaning the house (Luke 15:8). All these topics were not addressed by men in their conversations, but Jesus rescues them to illustrate central teachings, making sure that everyone could understand His teachings (Lozada and Angulo 1995, p.183).

Jesus knew that this new community, His Church, needed the contribution of the image of God embodied in womanhood, her creative capacity, her special talents and gifts. When women are removed from ministry, when their potential as collaborators in the kingdom of God is not recognized, when they are assigned roles of lesser value than men, God’s plan and the true development of a society is being mutilated.

Jesus treated women with dignity, just as He did with the rest of those oppressed and neglected by the society of His time. A discipleship program applicable to where there is still discrimination for certain social groups, must rescue these teachings of equality for children, women, elderly, immigrants, etc. to integrate them to serve in the community of the King.

A new kingdom with new values

Finally, we will learn that the Church should not be governed by the values of the world.



The church should not negotiate in those aspects of culture that go against the teachings of the Master. Jesus strove so that the disciples would understand this and learn to discern those cultural values that do not coincide with the holiness of life that God desires to give to His people. The new converts had to be disciplined in this aspect as well, so that they could discern these inherited sinful ideas and customs, in order to correct them in their lives, in their family and in their community.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summarizes the principles that must rule the life of this new community (Mt. 5,6,7 and Lk. 6), and He made special efforts so that all His disciples would learn to live and apply these principles in their lives. These values or principles of the kingdom of God have their anti-values, which are usually considered as common behaviors

in the cultural patterns practiced in society. These anti-values are sinful practices, transmitted from generation to generation; they are the fruit of sin and cause suffering in people. This is why to follow Jesus, to be part of His kingdom, these practices must be abandoned.

Example of values and anti-values of the kingdom of God

Values of the Kingdom	Bible Reference	Kingdom Antivalues
Share	Mark 6:34-44	Selfishness
Solidarity	Luke 10:30-37	Indifference
Justice	Matthew 6:33	Injustice
Truth	John 8:31-32	Lying
Freedom	Mark 2:27-28	Slavery
Gratuitousness	Luke 14:12-14	Profit
Fraternity	John 15:12-14	Enmity
Joy	Matthew 13:44	Sadness
Peace	John 14:27	Unrest
Trust	Luke 12:27-31	Distrust
Simplicity	Luke 18:9-14	Arrogance
Service	Mark 10:42-45	Domination
Forgiveness	Matthew 18:21-35	Resentment / Hatred
Denouncing wrong	Matthew 23:1-7	Silence
Love	John 15:9-10	Lovelessness
Life	Mark 3:1-5	Death
Cleverness	Luke 16:1-8	Naivety
Discernment	Luke 14:25,33	Thoughtlessness
Gratitude	Luke 17:11-19 Luke 14:12-14	Ungratefulness
Inclusion	Luke 14:12-14	Exclusion

Only when the Church, as the people of God, lives under the lordship of Christ and practices the values of the kingdom of God, can it bring blessing to its community (Gen. 12:1-3). It exists to bring more disciples into the kingdom, putting an end to the curse of sin in people's lives.

Principle:

Fundamental rule or idea that governs thought or conduct (Royal Spanish Academy).

Values:

Moral values are the norms and customs that are learned from society and guide the good or correct way to act. Christian values allow us to differentiate between what is right and wrong, what is just and what is unjust in the eyes of God. The values of the kingdom of God are best assimilated when they are instilled during childhood and reinforced by the example of adults in the community of faith.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Jesus Christ came to sow the seeds of the kingdom of God in this world. Everyone can be part of it if they forsake sin, allow the Holy Spirit to restore their lives, practice His values and grow as disciples of Jesus. The expansion strategy for this kingdom is discipleship.

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the following parables of Jesus and list some of the “women’s work” Jesus used to teach His listeners some truths of the kingdom of God.

- Luke 13:20-21 _____
- Matthew 25:1-13 _____
- Luke 15:8-10 _____
- Luke 18:1-8 _____

2. Are there some people who are despised or considered of lesser value in the society in which you live? What can we do as a church about it?

3. What can we do in the church so that children, youth and women have equal opportunities to grow in service and leadership?

4. Look again at the list of the values and anti-values of the kingdom of God. Identify the kingdom values you need to reinforce in your own life and make a list of things you can do to put them into practice in the coming weeks. Include your family, church, neighbors and other people you interact with.



LESSON 3

The Transforming Discipleship of Jesus

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To recognize that Jesus chose imperfect people as disciples.
- To identify imperfections that must be transformed.
- To value what Jesus accomplished with the twelve disciples.

Main Ideas

- We do not have to be flawless or perfect people when we begin the path of discipleship.
- Jesus can shape the lives of all who follow Him and learn from His example.

Introduction

Looking through the books of the New Testament at the gigantic work accomplished by the apostles, the reader can easily conclude that they were extraordinary men. However, those teachers who transformed the world do not seem to be the same ones who were with Jesus and who are portrayed in the Gospels.

In this lesson, we will see that Jesus chose twelve imperfect people who needed to be restored from the marks that sin had left on their lives before they could be useful instruments for the kingdom of God.

Jesus always believed in the potential, which is hidden because of sin, of every human being. That is why each person needs to enter into a process of restoration, through which they can perfect their character and develop their gifts and talents to invest in the kingdom of God. Jesus saw His disciples as saints in the process of formation.

Author J.M. Price in his book "Jesus the Teacher" tells the story of an invalid blacksmith who adopted a group of teenagers living on the streets. Some thought those young boys were worthless and unlikely to do any good with their lives. But the blacksmith spent his time teaching them and his reward was to see them become good people: a minister, a missionary, a cabinet member, a personal secretary to a president and a president of the United States! (Warren G. Harding).

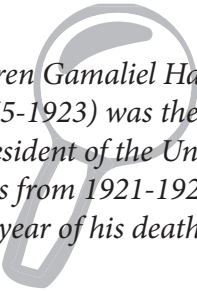
As a church, we have the privilege of collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the task of rescuing and transforming lives. We will begin this lesson by studying those imperfections and frailties that were present in Jesus' disciples, which must be taken care of in the life of each of our disciples in the same way.

Impulsive

In this section, we will talk about the importance of guiding impulses towards the good.



Impulsiveness is a weakness that we can see in several of the disciples, but mostly in Peter. Author Charles R. Brown describes him as follows: "He was an impulsive man, he was the impetuous type of man; like a stream that


Warren Gamaliel Harding (1865-1923) was the 29th President of the United States from 1921-1923, the year of his death.

rushes down the mountains, leaping over the rocks in its path, to rush into the valley below. His reactions were externalized in explosions. He acted first and then thought” (Price, n.d., p. 32).

Examples of Peter’s impetuosity are found in John 21:7, when he throws himself into the sea in the midst of a storm; in John 13:9, where he prevents the Lord from washing his feet, interrupting the class on humility that the Lord was giving to the disciples and later, the moment remembered by almost all Christians, when Peter denies knowing Jesus, in John 18:10.

John was another disciple in whom we can see this weakness. Not for nothing did Jesus nickname him “son of thunder”. John was the youngest of the group; he was a teenager between 16 and 18 years old when he began to follow Jesus. Occasionally, we see John in the Gospels expressing feelings, sometimes of enthusiasm and sometimes of anger. Luke 9:54 tells of the occasion when John and his brother James, filled with anger, proposed to Jesus the following: “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them.” Their intention was to destroy a whole village of Samaritans for the simple fact that they had refused them lodging, a proposal that Jesus not only rejected, but also rebuked them for their attitude (Lk. 9:55).

Impulsive people are usually passionate people, who often act or speak before thinking. Jesus did not repress impulsivity in His disciples, but taught them to guide their impulses and emotions, directing them for the good.

Let us value our impulsive disciples. The kingdom of God has been carried forward by courageous and passionate people, people willing to take risks to try new strategies, defend the abused, protect the weak and reach out to unknown people in new mission fields.

Sinners

Now, we will see the danger of allowing oneself to be dominated by sinful desires.



When Jesus called His disciples, they were people driven by their desires for sin. Judas Iscariot, for example, was dominated by greed and finally let himself be ruled by sin, sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and committed suicide (Mt. 26:14-16).

Peter was dominated by his fears, lying about his identity for fear of being arrested (Matt. 26:69-75). Several of them were dominated by pride, they came to argue about who would be first in the kingdom (Mk. 9:33-34). Their ambition for social recognition and political power is evident. Even at the last supper, when Jesus was preparing for His death, they were quarreling about who would have greater power in the kingdom of God (Lk. 22:24-27).

In His ministry, Jesus approached with compassion people who were dominated by all kinds of sinful passions: a corrupt man accustomed to stealing (Zacchaeus), an adulterous woman, another who practiced free love, like the Samaritan woman. Those people whom Jesus disciplined were no different from ourselves and our disciples.

Impulsive, impetuous:
a person who is carried away by their emotions or impulses and acts hastily, without reflecting or thinking about the consequences of their words or actions.

Impetuosity can help us to be successful, but when it is dominated by feelings of anger, it destroys:

*“It is steam in the boiler: that steam may make a ship without a pilot wreck; or if it escapes by mistake it may burn the passengers to death.”
(Brown, 1926, p. 167).*

Unable to solve problems



Now, we will see how Jesus taught them to solve problems.

In His ministry, Jesus approached with compassion people who were dominated by all kinds of sinful passions: a corrupt man accustomed to stealing (Zacchaeus), an adulterous woman, another who practiced free love, like the Samaritan woman. Those people whom Jesus disciplined were no different from ourselves and our disciples.

Jesus' disciples proved unable to solve many of the problems that arose. Some were their own, others were questions from the people. They did not know what to do and so they turned to Jesus to find a solution. Many of Jesus' teachings were oriented to answer these questions, for example: How many times should the offender be forgiven? (Mt. 18:21-35) Does adultery justify divorce? (Mt. 19:3) Who do I have a moral obligation to help? (Lk. 10:29) Should I pay taxes, even though I do not agree with how public money is administered? (Lk. 20:22) And others. We see, for example, in Matthew 18:21-35, when Peter asked Jesus: How many times should I forgive my brother who sins against me? Jesus could have answered that it depended on the sin, inquired a little more about the case and told him what he should do on that occasion. But if he did that, when faced with another conflict, Peter would come back with the same question. Instead, Jesus taught him the principle of forgiveness, one that would guide him throughout his life, whenever he was faced with such a situation.

The principle, in this case, is to forgive at all times, in an unlimited way. For the Jews of Jesus' time, the law of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Mt. 5:38-48) applied. They considered that they had the right to take revenge on their offenders just as their ancestor Lamech had done (Gen. 4:23-24).

*Matthew 5: 38, 44-45
"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'
But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. "*

Jesus spent much of His time answering people's personal questions, which are not unlike the questions our disciples have today. It is very important to create an atmosphere of trust so that the disciples can talk about their concerns and doubts. This trusting relationship is essential for teaching Christian principles and values, just as Jesus did.

Poor education



In this section, we will see that Jesus developed the minds of His disciples.

The disciples that Jesus called were people without much education. For many teachers, this is a difficulty that prevents them from doing their work well because they expect the students to catch up with them, that is, to fill in the gaps in their preparation so that they can understand the teachings of a course. But this is the opposite of the example that Jesus left us.

In Acts 4:13, it is written that the members of the Jewish government were surprised to see the intellectual development that had been achieved by Jesus' disciples: "*The rulers, seeing the boldness with which Peter and John spoke, and realizing that they were people without studies or preparation, were astonished and recognized that they had been with Jesus.*" These simple people achieved a preparation through discipleship that gave them the courage to speak fearlessly in front of a crowd of people.

In addition to overcoming their ignorance in many matters, the disciples had to change some mental patterns that were ingrained in them. For example, as J. Price explains, they had “a materialistic conception of life and a ritualistic idea of religion” (n/d, p.40).

In the Gospels we see that over and over again, the disciples and the people did not understand Jesus’ teachings. But this difficulty did not discourage Him; on the contrary, He sought other ways of teaching by means of illustrations, parables, by means of questions, by posing problems and even by means of His miracles!

What was the reason why the Pharisees looked down on Jesus’ disciples?

They were prejudiced

Now, we will talk about the disciples’ hardness of mind.



In addition to all that we have seen, Jesus had to teach people who were full of prejudices. A prejudice is to have a formed opinion or idea about something and to defend it, without knowing the matter in depth. The prejudiced person closes their mind, is tenacious to maintain their way of thinking and refuses to consider that there is another truth. Prejudice underlies many social behaviors that discriminate against groups based on race, sex, age, social position, beliefs, education, among others. The prejudiced attitude was condemned by Jesus, since it divides people and is the opposite of the unity that should characterize the children of God.

In His ministry, Jesus faced many prejudiced people, such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the rich who showed many types of prejudice ... and also His disciples.

We read in Mark 9:38: “‘Teacher,’ said John, ‘we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.’” John had an exclusivist attitude; he thought that only they had “license” to minister in Jesus’ name, and therefore forbade the others from continuing. But Jesus disagreed, since it is not correct to think that only one group has exclusive rights to minister to the needy on behalf of God (Mark 9:39-41).

Jesus touches on the issue of the prejudiced attitude in the parable of the sower. This is the first type of soil, that which is hard, where it is difficult for a seed to penetrate and develop (Matthew 13:3-23).

Prejudices become dangerous when they become massive through the media and social networks. The same happens when they are used by social or political groups, which turn them into ideologies, as happened with Nazism, to justify anti-Semitism and the murder of anyone who was not of the German Aryan race.

Unstable

In this section, we will see the danger of being weak in faith.



Finally, even Jesus, the best teacher the world has ever known, had deserters. Thousands of people gathered in crowds to hear His teachings, but in the end, after His death and resurrection, there were only one hundred and twenty who remained with Him.

The instability of His followers is evidenced in several passages. In John 6:67, a rich young man, who wanted to follow Jesus, turns back because he did not want to abandon his possessions. Peter broke his promise to follow his master even in death (Matt. 26:33-34).

Instability is unfaithfulness. Whatever we put first before the Lord shakes our faithfulness. Through discipleship, Jesus was able to bring His followers to a firm commitment in such a way that they boldly carried the light of the gospel to the nations.

Discipleship transforms

Finally, we will appreciate the results of Jesus' discipleship.



We have seen in this lesson that Jesus chose imperfect people who needed to be restored. The disciples were transformed because they recognized that need. Like in our day, in Jesus' time other people needed to be restored, but they did not recognize their need. The Pharisees, for example, were condemned by Jesus for their vanity and pride. They were unwilling to admit that, like all human beings, they too needed to be guided and restored by God.

Robert Coleman explains that the disciples chosen by the Lord, despite being unlettered and common men (Acts 4:13) had a great interest in spiritual things: "...they were honest men, willing to confess their need... Perhaps what was most significant about them was their sincere longing for God and for the realities of the divine life...The superficiality of the religious life around them had not dulled their hopes for the Messiah (Jn. 1:41, 45, 49; 6:69) ... They were looking for someone to lead them on the way of salvation. Shapable in the hands of the Master, they could be modelled after a new image: Jesus can make use of anyone who wishes to place himself at his service" (1972, p.17).

As we see, what made the difference was that these simple men were hungry for the Word of God; they were in search of the one who would guide them on the way of salvation, and they had a sincere longing for God and for the spiritual life. That is why they were able to be molded in the hands of the Master. Jesus made of this group of men with so many imperfections... "Judging by the results, the best generation of teachers the world has ever known: twelve men who later transformed the world" (Maquis quoted in Price, n.d., p. 46). T. R. Glover adds: "The greatest miracle in history seems to be the transformation that Jesus effected in those men" (Price, n.d., p. 45).

Christian teachers and disciplers are called to collaborate with the Holy Spirit in restoring the lives of every child, youth and adult that God places in our hands. Every life that is transformed is a miracle. Beth Moore says that Jesus still has today "...the mysterious and divine ability...to take a life and turn it upside down, inside out and every other way, while still holding it" (p. 19).

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. While studying the weaknesses present in the lives of the apostles, have you found one or more in your own life? Explain.

2. In groups of 3 to 4, make a list of examples that show the lack of development in the people of the congregation.

3. In the same groups, make a list of common prejudices of people in your community, ideas that are conveyed in the way people talk about other groups of people. Examples:

- People with tattoos are vicious.
- Lawyers are liars.

4. What thoughts come to your mind as a person who is gifted and called to be a teacher and discipler, when you read Beth Moore's quote about Jesus still having today? "...the mysterious and divine ability...to take a life and turn it upside down, inside out and every other way, while still holding it.?"



LESSON 4

The Disciple's Commitment

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To understand the kind of commitment that the call to discipleship requires.
- To reflect on the ingredients of Jesus' call.
- To understand the right motivation for becoming a disciple.

Main Ideas



- Jesus' call always includes two ingredients: invitation and challenge.
- "Come to me" is an invitation to grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Introduction

In the previous lesson, we studied that the disciples that Jesus called were people with many imperfections, but who were transformed as they went through the process of discipleship.

Another characteristic of the twelve is that they were very different, that is, Jesus called a heterogeneous group. They were people of different professions: Andrew, James, Peter and John were fishermen (Mt. 8:18-22), Matthew or Levi was a tax collector (Lk. 5:27-29). Among them was a thief and cheater, Judas, to whom we are astonished that Jesus assigned the responsibility of being the treasurer of the group, probably with the intention of giving him a second chance (Jn. 12:4-6).

They also belonged to different political parties. Their political ideas were so opposed that some of them considered themselves enemies of each other. Simon the Canaanite belonged to the Zealots, a radical political party that fought against Rome, i.e., he was a revolutionary anarchist. As Gabner-Hainer states: "Matthew and Simon Zealot were indeed, because of their origin, mortal political enemies" (1975, p. 407). We should also notice that the people hated Jews who were employees of the Roman Empire, especially tax collectors like Matthew.

Jesus would have had an easier time in His ministry if He had called people with greater similarities. However, Jesus made the decision to call a group representative of the Jewish population of that time. Jesus was aware that His disciples would form the seed of His church, which would integrate all types of people into a spiritual family.

In this lesson, we will study the ingredients of the call to Jesus' discipleship, the attitude required of those who want to initiate themselves in this process, and the conditions that Jesus places on His followers.

The call to discipleship

In this section, we will study the call to discipleship that comes from Jesus.



In the gospels, we can see that Jesus had a plan for the formation of the twelve. This plan, which can be described as "restorative," transformed them in body, soul and spirit. Jesus neglected none of these areas in His special ministry to His chosen twelve, leaving us with the ultimate model of Christian discipleship. To learn from this model, we must begin by studying in the Gospels the requirements for initiating a person into a process of discipleship.

Heterogeneous:

It is an adjective that means that something is made up of components that are different from each other, having nothing or very little in common.

Anarchist:

A person who adheres to philosophical and political ideas that reject the implementation of laws by the ruling state and all oppressive power. The problem is that many times in history, these rebel groups have sought to implement these changes through violence, killing people, destroying property and causing chaos.

Every discipleship process begins with a call from the Lord. The Greek word used for “call” is the verb *kalein*, and it was used to invite, call or summon someone. In Matthew 9:13, it is said that the purpose of Jesus’ coming was to issue an invitation: “*But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*” This is an invitation to approach Jesus; it is not an invitation that we deserve, but it comes from the goodness of God, from the grace of God (Galatians 1:6).

Matthew 11:28 also says: “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” The Lord’s invitation is for those who desire change, those who long to live with hope, who desire to leave pessimism and despair behind. It is for those who are tired of feeling defeated and frustrated, those who desire a new life project, in one that has a permanent value in what they do.

Ephesians 4:4 says that we have been “called in the same hope;” it is an invitation to live in fellowship with God and with others, to live a life clean of sin, to invest our gifts in God’s valuable and eternal project.

1 Peter 2:21 says: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

The invitation: come to me

In this section, we will study the conditions for initiation as a disciple.



The call of Christ has two ingredients. On the one hand, the invitation, and on the other, the challenge (Mt. 11:28, Jn. 7:37). Many people abandon discipleship during the first weeks because they are not willing to respond to the call of the Lord with all its implications.

This is similar to what happens when we do an activity in the church. Many people are attracted by the music, the preaching of the Word, the food, the gifts. This is the first call that attracts a crowd.

But when the activity is over, we call those same people to arrange the chairs and tables, to clean up and get everything ready for the next day’s service. And then, what usually happens? How many stay to help? That is the same thing that happens with the call of Jesus. The invitation attracts us, but when the commitment and the demands of following Jesus on a daily basis come, many give up.

That is why the Lord made clear the rules of the game. In Matthew 9:13, Jesus said: “*For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*” Jesus’ call is not for those who are content with their lives as they are, that is, those who have not come to experience the need for change. There are people who live in sin, but they have convinced themselves that this life satisfies them; they feel convinced of its goodness. They do not believe they need anyone’s help and they are not aware of their sins. They have not reached the point of recognizing that they need a meeting with God and a change of life. In these people, the Holy Spirit continues to work, and as a church, we continue to enlighten them so that they can understand that without Jesus Christ, they are lost and without hope.

“Only the love of God has been and is the driving force of this call” (William Barclay).

Metanoia:
Comes from the Greek *metanoien*, which means to change or correct the way of thinking. Describes the transformation of the mind.

Jesus' call is for those who recognize their need, for these are the ones who are ready for the radical change that Jesus invites. It is not a call to a cosmetic change, or an outward change, something like adding a few things to our life, such as going to church once in a while. This is what Jesus referred to when he said: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," (Mt. 12:7), pointing out the error of many Jews who lived in their accustomed sins, convinced that they were justified before God because they complied with the rituals in the temple.

Jesus' call is a call to enter His kingdom. Therefore, Jesus' condition is a firm decision by those who respond to His call and a deep desire to transform their whole life. This life-changing decision is called "repentance" (in Greek *metanoia*) in the Bible. It implied:

- A radical change in the way of thinking and acting.
- The decision to leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of God and the community of the King.
- The desire to assimilate, from Jesus, a new perspective on life.
- A sincere commitment to remain in this new life.

For Lozada y Angulo, the repentance to which Jesus called those who wanted to be His disciples was clear and firm. It was a call to belong and to commit to His new kingdom: "The response to enter the Kingdom cannot be an indecisive, conditioned or mediocre response. The proper response involves a radical reorientation of our values, according to those of the Kingdom, to present the world with an alternative, God's alternative for the restoration of all things. It is to bring to the world people who have chosen a personal and communal lifestyle that reflects the character and holiness of God described in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)" (1995, p.205).

Radical:
An adjective describing something that belongs, that is true to its base, its root.

The challenge: Follow me

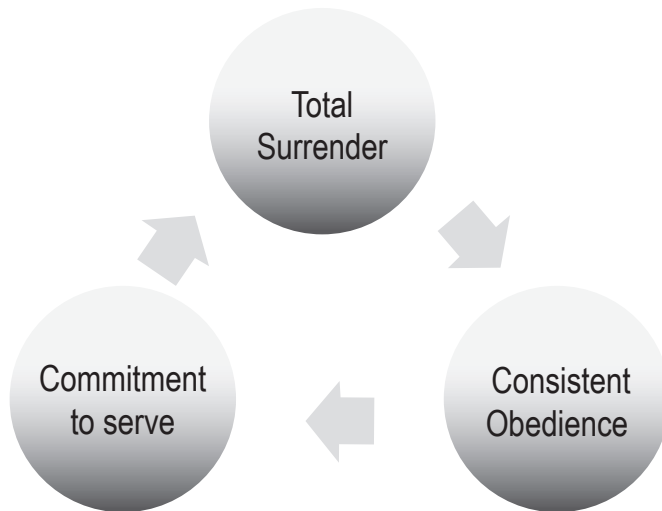
In this section, we will study the requirements to remain in Jesus' discipleship.



Jesus' call was preceded by the promise that His followers would have a different lifestyle. The invitation to come to Him, "come to me," is to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. "Follow me" meant more than going after Him, more than physically moving by walking a step or two behind His footsteps: "Follow...has always meant the willingness to accept His leadership and obey His instructions." ... "It is to recognize the need and desire for change when true discipleship is set in motion. However, even when there is a recognition of the need and an admission of the desire for change, the willingness to be changed is still lacking" (Briscoe, 1990, p. 40, 41, 48-49).

Accepting Jesus' invitation meant a commitment to change, a change that could only occur if the person had the will to be transformed. That is why Jesus set the following conditions for remaining in discipleship.

Conditions for remaining a disciple of Jesus



“God’s calling is intended to help us mature into what we are meant to be for Him and for our neighbors” (William Barclay).

First of all, “to die to oneself”. This implies a total and complete surrender of our will to the will of God (Mt. 16:24). It is an act of renouncing everything that could interfere with full obedience to the will of Jesus Christ. It is to put Jesus in the supreme place as Lord of our life.

Christ demands to be the absolute priority in the life of His disciples. “The decision to follow Christ presupposes the decision to abandon everything that could take our affections away from Him. One thing cannot exist without the other” (Briscoe, 1990, p. 34-35). This renunciation includes the surrender of all possessions, so that the Lord can have them and we can receive them again, but this time as managers of these resources (Lk. 5:11; 14:26,33; Mk. 10:7). To follow as a disciple supposes and means an unreserved surrender of one’s whole existence, and this surrender is for life (Jn. 11:16). To be a disciple means to follow the life example of Jesus, who was one hundred percent obedient to the will of God.

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’” (Matthew 16:24)

Secondly, to remain a disciple requires constancy. Whoever belongs to Christ must faithfully obey His Word at all times (Philippians 2:8). The teachings of the Master must be impressed upon the life of the disciples and, through them, be transmitted to others.

Finally, to bear fruit. The call to be a disciple always includes a call to service (Mt. 7:18). A disciple must be willing to give the best of himself in order to develop as a mature Christian and reproducer of mature disciples.

It is good to rescue the seriousness of Jesus’ call in these times when some preachers offer salvation with little or no requirements.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Jesus’ call is for a radical change. The starting point is repentance from sin and the full surrender of our life to Jesus Christ. It also requires the desire and willingness to be transformed. To remain requires total surrender, constancy in obedience and a commitment to service.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write a definition of "repentance" in your own words.

2. Evaluate the way your church communicates Jesus' call to discipleship. Do people understand the commitment involved? Explain.

3. Do you and your church members give evidence that Jesus is Lord of your whole life? Are there still areas of your lives that need to be surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, such as interpersonal relationships, attitude, finances, service, etc.?

4. In groups of 3-4 members share your answers to the above questions and answer:

- a. How can we help people understand the 100 percent commitment that being a disciple of Jesus requires?
- b. How can we teach people to be consistent in obeying the Word in the areas of their lives that they have not yet surrendered to the Lord?
- c. What must we change in the way we teach new believers, so that they make the decision to enter into this process of radical change to which Jesus invites us?



LESSON 5

A Change of Mind and Heart

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To understand that Jesus teaches us a new way of thinking.
- To reflect on the change of priorities that following Christ brings about.
- To appreciate the broad vision that Christ has for His disciples.

Main Ideas

- In the process of discipleship, Jesus wants to teach us to see the world, people and circumstances with His eyes.
- Discipleship involves a process of change, reordering the priorities of our lives.

Introduction

In the previous lesson, we saw that when Jesus calls us to discipleship, what He offers us is a life different from what we are used to. The call itself challenges us to a life of surrender and perfect obedience to God's will (Mt. 11:28, Jn. 7:37). The invitation "come to me," "follow me" marks the beginning of the transformation process, which requires accepting Jesus' leadership and obeying His instructions.

In the local church, many people visit us, sometimes they come to the meetings for several weeks, but not all of them are ready to start a process of discipleship. We must invite those in whom there is evidence of a desire to change and to know more about this new life that Jesus offers.

That is, in discipleship groups for new believers, we need to involve those people who recognize their need to be transformed: "It is in recognizing the need and desire for change that true discipleship is set in motion. However, even when there is a recognition of the need and an admission of the desire for change, the willingness to be changed is still lacking" (Briscoe, 1990, p. 48-49).

In following Jesus, the disciples were aware that His moral demands were high. Following the Master meant exposing their entire being to a radical and profound transformation in order to qualify as citizens of the kingdom that Jesus brought. However, this transformation would occur as a result of a process that begins in obedience to the call. With this call, Jesus succeeded in capturing their attention, but it was only much later that Jesus became the center of their lives, as a fruit of discipleship.

In this lesson we will see that the process of discipleship must transform our way of thinking and the motivations of our heart, so that Jesus may truly become the Lord of our life.

Jesus transformed their hearts

In this section, we will study the principles that Jesus taught them.



Jesus formed His disciples in a process that began with obedience to the call. However, the implications of this call would be understood little by little. When they made the decision to follow Jesus, He became the center

"It is in recognizing the need and desire for change that true discipleship is set in motion. However, even when there is a recognition of the need and an admission of the desire for change, the willingness to be changed is still lacking" (Briscoe, 1990, p. 48-49).

of their attention; then He had to win their affection, and only later could He obtain their loyalty when they recognized and respected Him as the authority in their lives (Briscoe, 1990, p.38).

Jesus' goal was to form his disciples' hearts, this organ that the Jews considered to be the center of feelings and will. Jesus did not waste time trying to change what they were doing, but first focused on the cause. He succeeded in changing their self-centered approach into the merciful vision of God.

In Matthew's Gospel, he relates several occasions in which Jesus sought to train His disciples in the new principles that should guide their lives. The first example is found in Matthew 10:16-22. Jesus sent His twelve disciples to preach in the villages of Israel, and also to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits (Matt.10:6-8). This work, which they were to do in the name of Jesus, would bring well-being to the lives of the people. However, in some of these villages, instead of words of gratitude, they would receive insults and mistreatment. Jesus warns them in verse 22:22, *"You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."* The reality we have seen in history is that those who serve Jesus must be willing to face slander, mistreatment, persecution, imprisonment and even death. Jesus does not deceive us with false promises, but tells us that His followers must be willing to accept sacrifice, just as our Lord did (Matt. 10:24-25).

In Matthew 18:1-7, we find another of these principles. The disciples were really concerned about the issue of hierarchy and how the positions of power in the new kingdom of God were to be distributed among them. Jesus then teaches them about the principle of humility, using a child as a model. Adults often think, like those disciples, that children are apprentices, that they have nothing to teach us. But Jesus makes them see their mistake. To be part of the kingdom of God, we must learn certain characteristics that are proper to little children, such as the power to marvel at creation, the willingness to forgive and forget offenses, and innocence and docility to learn and obey.

When a disciple does not learn to be humble, he is still ruled by pride. In Matthew 18:7, Jesus points out that Christians who have already had some time to follow Jesus, when they remain full of pride with their attitudes, words, and actions, cause new believers to "stumble," that is, to become discouraged and leave the community of faith.

The following example can be read in Matthew 20:23-28. Jesus teaches the style of leadership that should characterize Christian leaders: *"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"*

Principles:

Principles are the set of values, beliefs, norms, which guide and regulate the life of a person, an organization. For example: love your neighbor, do not lie, respect other people's lives, etc....

Jesus marks the difference between the servant's heart and the greedy heart of the rulers of the nations. The latter sought political power with the desire to rule, becoming dictators and believing themselves to be masters of the lives and property of the people over whom they ruled. The lust for power and wealth was one of Satan's temptations that Jesus faced and rejected (Matt. 4:8-10). Followers of Jesus, like their Lord Himself, should also be distinguished by a simple lifestyle, instead of living for the accumulation of goods and wealth, using their life and what they have to serve others.

Lord it Over:

This means to commit abuses and all kinds of excesses against the people, goods and property that we have been entrusted to care for. Examples of abusers are most kings, governors, emperors, presidents, heads of state, dictators and religious leaders who have no fear of God.

Finally, we will consider the passage in Matthew 23 where Jesus confronts His disciples on the subject of seeking fame, honors and prestige. This was the attitude they could observe in the scribes and Pharisees, who flaunted their positions, their education, their religiosity, their offerings, their clothes, among many other things, to attract attention to themselves. On the contrary, the disciples of Jesus should not seek glory for themselves, but for God, in everything they do. Among the disciples of Jesus there should not be some who are more important or worthy of honor than others, for we all follow the same Master and we are all His disciples and brethren to one another.

In Matthew, we have seen an example of the guiding principles that Jesus taught His disciples. By accepting these principles, they agreed to change their attitudes towards people and situations, and therefore, their actions were transformed as well. The acceptance of living according to these spiritual principles is the key that sets in motion the process of restoration of the individual so that the holy image of God can be rebuilt in the disciple and they can be completely restored.

The surrender of the will

Now, we will see what it means to be willing to take up the cross.



After some time of being in discipleship with Jesus, the disciples are subjected to an examination. As they were walking along, Jesus asked them about what people were saying about who He was. They replied that the people thought He was a prophet. Then Jesus asked them again, for now He wanted to know what they thought. This is when Peter answers, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God"* (Mark 6:29).

With this examination, Jesus was checking whether they had reached the learning objective about the revelation of Jesus to them as the Messiah that the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist had announced. Having achieved this fundamental objective, Jesus began to teach them about His death and resurrection. Although Jesus also spoke of His resurrection on the third day, it seems that after hearing the word "death," their ears were closed (Mark 8:31-32).

It is then that Peter called Jesus aside and tried to convince him that the way of death did not sound like the best option; it was better to think of

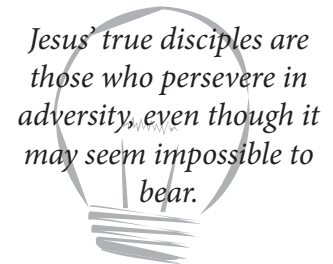
another strategy. We should not assume that Peter was the only one of the disciples who thought this way. Some of them had been disciples of John the Baptist, who ended up being imprisoned and beheaded. The disciples would not be exempt from meeting the same fate as their Master. In Mark 8:33, we can read the harsh words of Jesus, admonishing Peter, who without knowing it, was being a stumbling block to Him, for trying to turn Him away from His mission.

Later, when Jesus was teaching the crowds, He confronted them with these words in Mark 8:34: *“Then He called the crowds and His disciples. ‘If anyone wants to be my disciple,’ he told them, ‘let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”* Jesus is now more specific, not only warning them that being His disciple could lead to death, but that that death could be on a cross. To die by crucifixion was far worse than any other death; it was the most painful torment the Romans applied to the condemned.

Imagine the reaction of the disciples when they heard these words of Jesus! They were confronted with a decision. They had to surrender their will, surrender control of their lives and destinies to Jesus, or walk away from him.

In our day, the cross no longer represents suffering and death, as it did in Jesus’ time. However, for many Christians in our world, serving Christ exposes them to the risk of literal death. The promise of salvation in Matthew 24:13 is for those who persevere to the end: *“... but he who endures to the end will be saved.”* Jesus calls His disciples to persevere, whoever does not, loses his condition of disciple and may lose his salvation (Mark 8:34-38).

It is important to remember this demand of the Master at the beginning of the 21st century, where all things are taken as transitory, such as job, house, car, church and even the couple. The true disciples of Jesus are those who persevere in adversity, even when it seems impossible to bear.



Obedience to the Word of God

In this section, we will study the importance of allowing ourselves to be molded by the Word.



To remain a disciple of Jesus Christ, we need to submit to the authority of the Word. The life of a Christian cannot be built without the Bible. The Scriptures are our guide in the restoration process. When we study God’s Word, we can identify the sinful attitudes of our heart, as Jesus did with His disciples.

Sinful ways of thinking come from pride in our lives, which prevent the holiness of Jesus from manifesting itself in our being. In the process of discipleship, Jesus identified some of the ways of thinking that revealed these roots of selfishness, and He corrected them with love. For example:

1. They had difficulty in humbly serving their neighbor (Lk. 22:24-30).
2. They argued to defend their rights to be first (Mt. 18:1-5; Mk. 9:33-37; Lk. 9:46-48).

3. They were envious of one another (Matt. 20:24; Mark 10:41).
4. They resented people who were seeking Jesus (Mark 10:13).
5. They manifested a lot of harshness in judging others who did not think as they did (Lk. 9:51-54).

Like Jesus, disciple-makers must be patient with the lack of maturity and evidence of prideful hearts in those we disciple. Robert E. Coleman reminds us of Jesus' example: "To such men Jesus was willing to overlook many things that were born of pride and their spiritual immaturity. He knew that they could overcome these defects as they grew in grace and knowledge" (1972, p.43-44). At the same time, we should not ignore the bad attitudes of our disciples, but take advantage of the occasion to show and teach them the right attitude that God expects from His children and encourage them to move forward.

The life of a Christian cannot be built without the Bible. The Scriptures are our guide in the restoration process. When we study the Word, we can identify the sinful attitudes of our heart, as Jesus did with his disciples.

Learning to love as God loves

In this section, we will see that God's love is something that can be learned.



God loves every human being with holy love. The way human beings love is very distant from that love; that is why we must learn to love as God loves. God's love is more than words, it is more than an emotion, it is a love that is demonstrated in concrete actions. For Jesus' disciples, learning to love one another with God's holy love is not an option, it is essential. This love is powerful in transforming people and is fundamental to their spiritual development.

Jesus knew that the disciples must remain united when He was not among them, and this is why He prayed to the Father to the very end that they might be indwelt with this kind of unselfish love. The key to the unity of the church is found in the new commandment: love one another (John 13:34). Jesus taught them that they were not to function independently. As Lewis points out, "...Christ's great purpose was to mold them together to such an extent that they would function as a unit"...and that "...by training them to work in love, He was making sure that the church understood the basis on which it was to function internally" (1990, p.94).

God's holy love is for everyone equally, that is, it excludes no person because of gender, age or social status. It is regrettable to observe in some "Christian" churches that women, children or young people, for example, are relegated to second class status. These churches impoverish themselves by discarding the potential that God has shaped in these people, and are barriers to the growth and development of their brothers and sisters.

"It is easy to talk, but loving is hard work, especially when it comes to doing helpful, humble and simple tasks. It is common for believers to say out loud that they love, while at the same time not wanting to serve. When that happens, spiritual surgery is needed. (Briscoe, 1990, p. 172).

New goals, new vision

Finally, we will see that Jesus wants us to see the future with His eyes.



All of us, as we become disciples, have personal dreams, goals and desires. These aspirations may be good, according to our way of seeing. But let us remember that in the process of discipleship, we must learn a new way of thinking, which includes reordering our goals and priorities according to the plan that God will reveal to us for our lives.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus teaches that the disciple must “seek” the kingdom of God and its righteousness. “Seek” is the translation of the Greek *zeteo*, “to go after.” As Vargas Cruzado explains, “To seek the kingdom of God first, in the spiritual sense, is to seek God’s sovereignty over one... God’s subdites never act according to their own convenience, nor do they bow to the convenience of other humans, but to God’s” (1991, p.20, 22).

Jesus taught His disciples to do God’s will in each and every area of their lives. To achieve this, we must learn to put God’s desires above our own, so that God’s goals become our own. In this process, God’s desires and ours merge and our goals are reorganized according to God’s will.

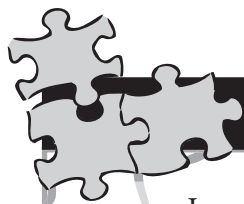
Jesus also broadened their vision. They gradually came to understand the purpose for which the church existed in the world. Jesus gave them a perspective to all nations. He challenged them to look at the fields “for they are already white for harvest” and made them know in certain terms that “the field is the world” (Lewis, 1990, p.94).

When we place our lives in the hands of Jesus Christ, He leads us in directions we never imagined, to be Christians who influence the lives of many people, bringing them closer to the love of God and leading them to be disciples of the Lord (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

The commandment to love as Jesus did can only be obeyed by depending on the Holy Spirit and His ongoing work in the disciple.

*“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
(Matthew 6:33)*

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?
(2 Corinthians 2:14-16)*



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Jesus transformed His disciples’ way of thinking and loving, taught them to surrender their will to the will of God as revealed in His Word, and broadened their vision so that they could reorder their goals and priorities according to God’s plan for their lives.

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. *When is the right time to invite people to start the discipleship process? What signs should we observe?*

2. *In the time of Jesus, what was the evidence that a disciple had surrendered their will, according to Mark 8:34-38? What would be the evidence for contemporary people?*

3. *Name some differences between the holy love that God models and teaches us and the love that we are accustomed to practicing?*

4. *In groups of 3-4, identify some ways of thinking that you can see in people in your community that are opposed to the way of thinking that Jesus teaches us.*

5. *In the same groups, come up with some ideas to help new disciples value Bible study.*

6. *In your opinion, what is the importance of broadening the vision of those we disciple as part of their spiritual development?*



LESSON 6

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Disciple

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To value the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ.
- To understand that only when filled with the Holy Spirit can we live like Jesus.
- To demonstrate receptivity to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Main Ideas

- Jesus demonstrated that it is possible to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit.
- The filling of the Spirit is not about the Spirit filling us up in stages, but on the contrary, it is the Spirit who fills us up completely each time.

Introduction

The work that the Holy Spirit would come to do in human hearts occupied a central place in Jesus' teachings, for it was His priority to prepare His disciples to experience the fullness of the Spirit. This was a difficult subject for them to understand since Jesus spoke of something that had no precedent in human history, but at the same time, they could observe that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and that enabled him to do what he did.

In the Old Testament, the anointing of the Spirit of God upon a human being was symbolized by the pouring of oil. This anointing was an exclusive requirement reserved only for kings and the high priest (Lev. 8:12; 1 Sam. 16:12). The prophet Isaiah announced that the Messiah expected by Israel would be "anointed" with the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:1-2 says, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—" Later in Isaiah 61:1, the prophet anticipates the work of the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."

In this lesson we will study the model of Jesus and His teachings on how to experience a life filled with the Holy Spirit, an indispensable requirement for every disciple of the Lord.

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit

In this section, we will study the fullness of the Spirit in Jesus.



In the testimony of the Gospels, it is clear that Jesus' life and ministry were completely filled with the Spirit. From the moment of His conception, the Holy Spirit was present in Jesus' life: "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Lk. 1:35).

Jesus repeatedly uses oil as a symbol of the action of the Holy Spirit anointing his disciples. In Jesus' time oil was constantly used in the temple lamps and they symbolized the work of the coming Messiah. (Ex. 27:20,21, Zech. 4:2-14). The oil also illustrates the illuminating function of the Spirit guiding the disciple of Christ into the truth (Jn. 16:14; 1 Jn. 2:27; Phil. 3:3).

I refer to Jesus of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he worked for good and healed all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him (Acts 10:38).

In Luke 4:18, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus makes the words of Isaiah 61:1 His own. He announced that He was the Messiah sent by God and that He was empowered by the Holy Spirit for the work that God had entrusted to Him.

In John 1:33, we see that when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Spirit descended and remained on Him in the form of a dove. This was the first time in human history that the Holy Spirit could come to rest on a sinless heart, for unlike His disciples, Jesus did not have to be regenerated before the Holy Spirit could fully fill Him.

Jesus' dealings with the Spirit were person to person. People could see that the Spirit of God filled Jesus' whole being (Jn. 3:34; Lk. 4:1). On one occasion, Jesus declared that it was by the Holy Spirit that He cast out demons (Jn. 14:10). He also testified that He was taught and directed by the Spirit (Jn. 8:29; 8:28). It was by the Holy Spirit that Christ was able to pass through the death and resurrection experience in victory (Heb. 9:14; Rom. 8:11) and finally be glorified (Rom. 1:4; Tim. 3:16).

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to His children

Now, we will see that we cannot become children of God without the work of the Spirit.



Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as a wind that has the power to regenerate and empower for the work of ministry (Jn. 3:8). In Acts 2:1-2, we read about when the early church was able to experience this teaching of Jesus in their own experience, when the Spirit descended like a mighty wind on all the disciples who were gathered together in prayer.

The New Testament mentions multiple functions of the Spirit for our salvation. In the first place, it is the Spirit who makes it possible for us to become children of God. He is the one who convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:8-11), since man must first admit his sinful condition and feel guilty before he turns to the Savior (Rom. 2:14,15). After showing man his lost condition, the Spirit produces in the heart the conviction that Jesus is the Savior and makes it possible for the believer to accept the righteousness offered by the Lord through faith (Rom. 5:19). The obstinacy in rejecting this double witness of the Spirit in the heart is what Jesus points out as the unforgivable sin (Jn. 12:37-40; Heb. 10:26-31). In other passages, believers are especially warned to beware of "lying to the Spirit" (Acts 5:3), "tempting Him" (Acts 5:9), "resisting Him" (Acts 7:51), "grieving Him" (Eph. 4:30), "reviling Him" (Heb. 10:29), which add to and amplify the warning received from the Lord against "blaspheming Him" (Matt. 12:31).

Secondly, it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates the corrupt nature of the human being and causes the repentant believer to be born again (Jn. 3:3-9). It is the Spirit who regenerates the believer, baptizes him, adopts him into the family of God (Rom. 8:15), seals him, comes to dwell in him, anoints him for service and bestows: "life" (Rom. 6:2), "faith" (2 Cor. 4:13), "love",

Jesus was always aware of the presence of the Spirit in His being and referred to Him as: "Spirit of the Father" (Mt. 10:20), "Spirit of truth" (Jn. 14:17), "Spirit of worship" (Jn. 4:23) and the Comforter (Jn. 14:26).

The sin against the Spirit is the voluntary refusal, even unto death, of the salvation offered by Jesus on the cross. Not believing in Jesus when He is revealed by the Spirit is the gravest sin of all (Jn. 16:8-9), graver even than the sin committed by those who did not believe in Him when He came in the flesh (Jn. 15:22). The Spirit respects free will and never forces a person to convert.

God abandons these people in their sin because as man hardens his heart, repenting and believing for forgiveness becomes impossible.

“strength”, “wisdom” (2 Tim. 1:7), “power” (Eph. 3:20; Rom. 15:13), “grace” (Heb. 10:29), “glory” (1 Pet. 4:14) and “revelation” (Eph. 1:17). These are all different aspects of the Spirit’s regenerative work in the life of the believer at the moment of conversion (Jn. 1:12,13; 3:5, 6, 36 and 5:24; Eph. 2:5-6; Tit. 3:5,6; Gal. 5:25).

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

(2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Thirdly, the Spirit, like eternal life, is a gift of God that must be accepted; it is not enough to simply believe in Jesus intellectually. We must invite the Spirit into our lives (Rom. 6:23). On six occasions in the book of Acts, the Spirit is called the “gift of God”, which is for those who respond to the call to repentance and to initiate a new life that Jesus Christ gives them (2:38; 5:32; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; 15:8). The moment one believes in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and accepts Him as Lord, one receives both gifts: eternal life and the Spirit. The Spirit is the seal that distinguishes the children of God, it is the distinctive mark of the redeemed (Eph. 1:33, 4:30 and 2 Cor. 1:22), the proof that they have been made part of God’s people (Eph. 1:13,14 and 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 2 Tim. 1:14).

As we see, it is only with the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we become sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-7). The apostle Paul taught that the Spirit dwells in true believers (Rom. 8:9-11). In Romans 8:9 he states, “...*And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*” and then in 8:14 he reiterates: “*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God*” and in 1 Corinthians it is the Spirit that identifies the true Christian: “*But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit (the Spirit of Christ); ... Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;*” (6:17,19).

From the moment of conversion, the work of the Spirit is indispensable in the new disciple, since it is the Holy Spirit who transmits the life of Christ (Jn. 6:63, Rom. 8:2). This first experience of being indwelt by the Spirit during the conversion experience must be differentiated from a deeper experience described as “being filled with the Spirit” in the writings of the apostles.

Some of the functions of the Spirit as a counselor are: witnessing, hearing, speaking and leading to the truth (Jn.15:26, 16:13). He also performs the function of intercessor, supporting the Christian in their communication to the Father through prayer (Rom. 8:26).

Some Christians are not aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This can occur for several reasons: due to lack of teaching, because there are unconfessed sins that prevent communion with God, because they are hoping to base their certainty on their emotions and feelings or because they feel discouraged, empty or sad and doubt the presence of the Spirit in their lives. Many are unaware that like regeneration, the Holy Spirit is received by faith. Jesus warned about believing by sight in John 11:40, to which Paul adds that you cannot see the fruit before you believe (Gal. 5:22).

The Spirit is the water of life promised by Jesus

In this section, we will study that Jesus is the One who bestows His Spirit on us.



As we saw in the previous section, the condition for receiving the Holy Spirit is to believe in Jesus and obey Him (Jn. 6:29, 7:38). The Christian's first act of obedience is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 5:32; 1 John 3:23). Jesus is the One who bestows His Spirit on those who believe, which is why He identifies Himself as the source of living water (Jn. 6:35).

In his teachings, Jesus frequently uses the image of water (Jn. 4:14; 7:38,39). This water image had already been used in the Old Testament to refer to the action of the Spirit (Isa. 44:3, Ex. 17:6). Jesus announced that He had the power to send the Holy Spirit to live within the hearts of men and women who had believed in Him (Jn. 16:7; 14:16-17).

The spiritual presence of the Savior God in the hearts of all believers is the indispensable complement in the work of Jesus Christ.

While Jesus walked this earth, He was able to remain with a group of His disciples, but His reach was physically limited to a determined temporal and geographical space. On the other hand, after His departure, by sending His Spirit to dwell in the hearts of His sons and daughters, His presence can be in the heart of each of His disciples, even if they are distributed throughout the earth (Paché, 1982, p.97). In the physical absence of Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit who is present, who sustains and accompanies us (Jn 4:14, 14:17).

This comparison of the Holy Spirit with a torrent of water points to the results of the fullness of the Spirit in the believer's life. The Spirit acts like waves that spread everywhere. They cannot be contained, nor can their impact be restrained. These are not waves that destroy, but carry life: "From him who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will flow rivers of living water" (Jn. 7:38). In John 6:63, Jesus said: "The Spirit gives life...". The Holy Spirit transmits the life of Christ and causes the life of the disciple to develop, expand and be transmitted to others.

The life that the Spirit bestows is a new life, which restores in us that life that God planned for His children since He placed the first couple in the Garden of Eden. It is a life of perfect happiness, one in which the joy of God remains in the heart in spite of the adverse circumstances we may go through (Jn. 4:14; 6:35; 10:10). This is possible because the Spirit transforms our attitude by prompting us to worship with gratitude in every situation (Eph. 5:18-21). It is precisely this attitude of resistant joy that amazes the world and turns the believer into an effective witness for Christ.

When the Holy Spirit lives in a child of God, the Father and the Son also remain in their being (1 Jn. 3:24, 1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 2:22). Just as the Father and the Spirit indwelt Jesus, the Spirit-filled Christian has the fullness of the Godhead living in him or her (Col. 2:9,10).

Passages that show that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer from the moment of conversion are Galatians 3:13,14; Ephesians 1:13; Acts 19:1-7. In these cases, the disciples had not heard of the Holy Spirit and therefore were not aware of the power dwelling in them.

The Christian who has the Spirit has Christ, the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9,10), living in his being. Jesus came to dwell in our being through the Spirit, that is why his name is Immanuel, God with us... God in us (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus came and was crucified to dwell in our being through the Spirit. That is why His name is Immanuel, which means God with us... God in us (Gal. 2:20).

In 1 John 1:16, it is stated that the same fullness of the Spirit that indwelt Jesus is available to all disciples of the Lord. All followers of Jesus Christ are called to participate in this experience, rather than just contemplating it in the life of the Master.

In John 14:17, 20, Jesus says that His disciples will be able to know (be aware of) the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This is because the Spirit indwelling the regenerate believer communicates with the human spirit, becoming their counselor.

How does one receive the filling of the Spirit?

Finally, we are going to study the conditions to be filled with the Spirit.



Any grace received from God requires a willing heart. In order for the Holy Spirit to fill an individual, some conditions of receptivity must be found, and they are listed below:

1. Confession of any conscious sin. Anything that saddens the Spirit, turning us away from God, prevents Him from being able to fill the human heart (1 Jn. 1:9).
2. Desiring the fullness of the Spirit. Paul uses the metaphor of water and thirst to illustrate that the Spirit does not refuse to fill a heart that strongly longs for Him (Eph. 5:18; Jn. 7:37). As long as we look at sin and the things that satisfy our selfish desires with love, we cannot be filled. John 7:37-39 is an invitation to make a personal and permanent decision.

Some people cannot be filled with the Spirit because they are too satisfied with themselves, their godliness and their works. They glory in their past triumphs and experiences. There is no hope for those who do not recognize their spiritual need, for those who have not come to the point of giving all they have to win Christ (Phil. 3:8).

Desiring to be holy, to live in spiritual victory and abundance of power, is the opposite of living in constant defeat, weakness and constant sadness.

3. Complete abandonment in God's hands. René Paché compares the Spirit to an occupying force: "He immediately occupies every parcel of our being that we yield to Him, just as the air immediately fills every empty space that comes its way" (1982, p. 117). This sincere abandonment is what Paul calls placing oneself on the altar of sacrifice (Rom. 5:13; 12:1).

Fullness:

In the New Testament it is translated from the Greek "pleroma" and expresses full, whole, totality, something that is complete.

In this act of renunciation, God receives all that we are as an offering. God wants our consent to penetrate all parts of our being in order to transform and purify them. He does not wait for us to divest ourselves of sin in order to enter, He wants to enter in order to free us from sin (Phil. 2:13).

4. The fullness of the Spirit is received by faith. It is essential to believe that God will fulfill His promise and fill our whole being with His Spirit (Jn. 4:14; 7:37-39). This faith must be placed in Jesus Christ, not in other people or in ourselves. We need to believe that He will be present every day by His Spirit. Not believing that the Spirit can fill us limits the power of the Holy Spirit to operate. Some do not believe because they do not feel anything. But Jesus taught that the condition for seeing the glory of God is to believe (Jn. 11:40). It is by faith that one receives the “new life” and the fullness of the Spirit.
5. In an instant (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17). The filling of the Spirit is not by measure, nor in progressive stages. The Spirit fills and leads our being in a process of integral restoration, leading us each day to be more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

The filling of the Spirit does not mean that the Spirit fills us in stages, but that it is the Spirit who has more and more of the believer. His work in our life leads us to an ever more complete and perfect surrender to the will of Christ. It is the Christian who needs to give himself more and more to God.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Jesus lived and ministered in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and taught that, following his example, we should be receptive to the work of the Spirit in our lives. It is the Spirit who makes it possible for us to be born again. But we also need Him to fill our whole being, to be our counselor and guide, teaching us to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus and the Father are always with us.

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Point out a passage in the Gospels where you have been able to notice that Jesus lived and ministered filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. Read Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 in several versions of the Bible. Then answer the following questions.

- Why did Jesus need to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Could He have resisted temptation and lived without sin by His own human strength?
- Could He have fulfilled the mission the Father entrusted to Him without the fullness of the Spirit?
- How do you apply Jesus' experience to your life?

3. Jesus and the apostles taught about the many functions the Spirit performs for our salvation and sanctification. Name some that are new to you, based on what you have studied in this lesson.

4. Examine if the five requirements for receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit are fulfilled in your life (last point of the lesson). If any requirement is still weak, write a prayer asking God to strengthen that area of your life so that you can be filled with the Spirit, as Jesus taught us.

5. If upon examination you verify that you meet all five requirements, write a prayer asking the Lord to fill you with His Spirit right now. Then write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for this gift He has given you.



LESSON 7

A New Life

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To understand that Christians need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- To value the work of the Spirit to sanctify us.
- To identify some habits and behaviors that are contrary to holiness.

Main Ideas

- The Holy Spirit empowers us to live in purity, following Jesus' example.
- The filling of the Spirit fills us with God's holy love.
- A Spirit-filled life is oriented to serve God.

Introduction

In the book of Acts, it is observed that the fullness of the Spirit was a normal experience in the Early Church:

- Leaders were to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 8:4; 11:24; 13:9).
- The deacons were to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:3, 7:55).
- The groups of disciples were filled. The 120 in Acts 2:4 and the multitude of 5000 in Acts 4:4,41.
- The new converts were sometimes filled, as in Acts 9:17 and 13:52.

Without the Spirit, man can be filled with evil qualities such as: anger (Acts 19:28; Lk. 4:28), wrath (Lk. 6:11), envy (Acts 5:17, 13:45). Peter affirms that these evils come from Satan.

In the times of the early Church, the filling of the Spirit was not an option, but a requirement (Heb. 12:4 and Eph. 4:13). For the early disciples, there was no doubt regarding the need for all believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Galatians 5:25, the apostle Paul says: *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit means to be filled with the life of Christ and this life is opposed to the life of the world. A worldly life is the one ruled by the lower instincts, while the life of the spiritual man and woman is guided by the Holy Spirit of God"* (Phil. 1:11; Gal. 5:19-20). He also taught the church in Ephesus that God desires that believers of all ages would be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). To the brethren in the church at Corinth, he encouraged them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, since they had been baptized and had received the Spirit, yet they were like children, unable to assimilate and apply deeper spiritual matters to their lives (1 Cor. 1:13; 6:9 and 3:1-3). This spiritual immaturity exposed them to the grave danger of abandoning the faith (Gal. 3:27; 4:6; 1:6; 3:3 and 4:11).

Can we not live the Christian life without the infilling of the Spirit? René Paché answers this question: "It is easy to understand why God wants to fill us with His Spirit. He knows that we cannot serve two masters. So, from the moment He comes to dwell in us, His desire is that the Spirit fills us completely, so that He can sanctify us, free us and transform us into His image" (Paché, 1982, p. 117). That is why God always seeks for us to be more filled with His Spirit, as James 4:5 states: *"Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?"*, just as a father desires the fullness of health and strength for his children.

In this lesson, we will study the main teachings of the Master regarding the work that the Spirit does in us, leading us to live this new life as sons and daughters of God.

Purify

In this section, we will study that the Spirit gives us inner purity.



In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist announced: *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose*

sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Jesus would come to baptize with a different baptism, which would burn up every vestige of evil rooted in the heart (Mt. 3:11,12 and Lk. 3:16,17). This baptism would be the seal that would distinguish the true children of God.

Jesus reaffirmed this announcement, communicating to His followers His demands for a high quality of spiritual life. In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), He taught that His disciples were to be characterized by purity and the absence of evil. His followers were to adopt a personal and communal lifestyle that reflected the character and holiness of God (Lozada and Angulo, 1995, p. 205).

From the filling of the Spirit, the believer experiences progressive victory over sin (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:17). This interior purification makes the exterior lovable and eliminates everything that impedes perfect communion with God. In an instant, it is possible to be free of every sin of which one is conscious, but the Spirit will do a deeper work of purity by progressively revealing some sins of which one was not previously conscious. The Spirit sensitizes the conscience, and if its voice is listened to and allowed to act and cleanse those areas, growth progressively takes place and the believer is more and more filled with the presence of the Spirit.

This work of sanctification is possible to the extent that the Holy Spirit possesses more and more of the human heart. This is why the filling of the Holy Spirit is an experience that is lived and perfected day by day.

Some passages that affirm that God sanctifies the believer at the moment of being filled with the Spirit are: Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2.

To succeed in this school of holiness of life requires responsiveness and perseverance.

Discipline

In this section we will study that the Spirit helps us to have healthy discipline.



In the Christian life, we disciples need to include in our lives some disciplines that will help us to remain in the way of the Lord. But the disciplined life is not easy, that is why we need the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called for obedience from His disciples, which was a prerequisite to maintain their status as disciples. For Jesus, obedience had to grow in the lives of the disciples and as a proof of this, He expected them to put into practice each new truth that He taught them. Jesus taught that this discipline should embrace all areas of life. “In the spiritual area, he fulfills his duties to God. In his social life, he fulfills all his duties as a responsible citizen, being an example to those who do not know God... he makes good stewardship of his time, money and body” (Vargas Cruzado, 1990, p.17-28).

A disciplined Christian life makes us strong to overcome temptations. Any distraction that takes the disciple away from the spiritual disciplines is a dangerous temptation. Satan uses distractions, he is a master in the art of distracting believers from healthy habits that produce spiritual growth, such as Bible reading, prayer, worship attendance and service to others.

He fills us with love

Henrichsen summarizes the problem of undisciplined living as follows: “You sow a thought and reap an act, you sow an act and reap a habit, you sow a habit and reap an eternity” (1976, p.29).

“The believer who individually does not learn to focus his attention on the needs of others and to minister to meet them remains perpetually immature” (Lewis 1990:86-87).

A neglected vine “produces shoots that serve only to take energy away from the trunk, so discipleship, if not cared for and held accountable, will degenerate into an exercise without fruit and energy” (Briscoe 1990, p.190).

In this section, we will study that the Spirit fills us with God’s holy love.



Jesus’ call is a call to live in the perfection of love. When we look at the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, we realize that it is impossible for the world to believe the message of salvation if we do not practice God’s holy love. Jesus prepared His disciples to be filled with the Spirit, for without this experience, it was not possible for them to live in holiness and love others with the pure and holy love of God (Jn.17:21,23).

This holy love is also called perfect love. This is the love that holds the church together, that moves us to intercede in prayer for the lives of others, that leads us to serve and sacrifice for others. In the epistle to the Romans, Paul explains that he who lives filled with the Spirit lives in perfect love. This love is expressed in loving God with all our heart, fulfilling all His commandments and in loving other people with purity of heart. As Dr. Purkiser explains: “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; so the fulfillment of the law is love (Romans 13:8-10)”. Perfect love implies the elimination of all resentment and all ill will. Its quality is pure; nothing contrary to love remains in the heart of the sanctified person (Purkiser 1979, p.385).

By filling the heart of the believer, the Holy Spirit brings about a change in motives and affections, guiding them toward the perfect will of God. These changes are seen in a deeper love for God, for his work, and for all people, a love that does not seek its own, but always and in everything seeks the advancement of the kingdom of God.

He or she produces fruit

In this section, we are going to study the fruit of the filling of the Spirit.



The fruit that Jesus expected from His disciples was one of quality. Jesus uses the parable of the vine to teach about this fruit that He expects from His followers. He expected them to grow and reproduce in their lives a character similar to His own. The characteristics of Christ’s life were to be reflected to the world through them: “If the teacher is the Vine, the disciples are the branches, and the Christ-like character is the fruit, and the Father is the Gardener who tends the branches for the purpose of having more production of better fruit” (Briscoe, 1990, p.183, 189). Fruit can then be defined as the outward evidence of the inner life.

Through the parable of the vine, the Lord was preparing His disciples to accept the “pruning.” It is clear in John 15:2 that the branch that does not bear fruit will eventually be cut off. Jesus taught that it is the Father who does the “pruning,” for He is the one who sowed the vine, which is Christ. God uses prayer and the study of the Word as a means for pruning, but He also uses relationships in the church. The disciple is grafted into a vine, in which there is interrelation with the rest of the branches. The stronger branches nourish the smaller ones and care for their well-being. In the same way, the older leaders and brothers of the local church should care for the new disciples.

Constant growth

In this section, we will talk about how the Spirit helps us to grow.



When the believer gives freedom to the Spirit to act in his or her life, he leads to spiritual maturity. The Spirit leads to growth in grace and knowledge, remembers and teaches (Jn. 14:26; 7:38,39). The Spirit gives capacities so that the disciple can participate in God's mission. The growth that the Spirit produces in us is multidirectional; it regenerates all areas of our life.

It is not only about acquiring more intellectual knowledge, which carries the danger of self-conceit that only builds pride, but an inner transformation that produces a change in the whole way of living and relating to God and to others (James 2:18, Eph. 5:8, Matt. 7:16).

To grow in the Christian life, we need a variety of experiences such as worship, fellowship, Bible study and the application of what we learn to daily life. This process transforms our way of thinking, convictions and character.

The Holy Spirit fills us so that we can grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ, but this growth is not automatic, but must be intentional, and therefore requires a daily commitment from the Christian for their entire life (Heb. 5:12, Phil. 2:12, Rom. 6:13).

Jesus was more concerned about the quality than the quantity of disciples. Two thousand years later, the church has proven over and over again that having healthy disciples naturally grows the church.

Power to serve

Finally, we will see that the Spirit empowers us to serve others.



Jesus taught that true greatness in life is to be found in the path of service. This is the most important principle of Christian leaders. Christian service is not only for leaders, but for all disciples of the Lord, who must serve this world with the same attitude of Jesus.

Jesus trained His disciples for ministry, being a model and living example for them. He sent them out and then sat with them to evaluate the results. He never asked them to do anything He was not willing to do. Each of His disciples must take an active part in the propagation of this holy lifestyle, collaborating in the task of transforming their context in the same way that Jesus did, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Spirit who gives capacities (talents and spiritual gifts) to the disciple so that he can participate in the extension of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 12:9-10). The filling of the Spirit empowers us to witness and serve the world in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41).

The Spirit calls all believers to ministry (Acts 13:2) and also sends and directs his workers (Acts 1:29; 13:4; 16:6,8).



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

All disciples of Jesus must experience the filling of the Holy Spirit. This experience purifies them from sin, fills them with God's holy love, enables them to reproduce the life of Christ, guides them in a constant growth and disciplined life, and empowers them to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and to use their gifts to serve the world.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write down three reasons why it is beneficial for a volunteer to be trained in ministry practice by a more experienced leader.

Works that flow from a selfish heart	Works that flow from a Spirit-filled heart

2. What does the Holy Spirit do to produce spiritual growth in the disciple? Answer according to the following passages.

- John 4:14, 7:38-39
- John 15:3, 17:17; Ephesians 5:26
- 1 Corinthians 12:9-10

3. What are the habits or disciplines that have strengthened you, that have helped you grow in your spiritual life? Share your answer with the rest of the class and compare your responses.

4. Discuss as a group this thought from Stuart Briscoe, applying it to the reality of your local church members and then respond:

“...it is most serious when dead branches obstruct the growth of the vine. Unpruned branches cease to produce all they could; dead branches lead to destruction, decay, and disease...Modern disciples should be aware that the community of believers is always vulnerable to the invasion of dead branches” (1990, p.191-192).

- a. What are the symptoms that might indicate that a member is weak, sick or spiritually dead?
- b. Make a list of the causes which produce spiritual weakness or sickness in the members of your congregation.
- c. What are the dangers that threaten a congregation that does not take care to strengthen weakened and sick branches?
- d. How can we help the weak branches of the congregation to be strengthened?



LESSON 8

Jesus' Strategy

Biblical Foundations for Discipleship

Objectives

- To value Jesus' teaching methods and strategies.
- To understand that we need others to mature in our faith.
- Evaluate how we use experiential learning.

Main Ideas

- Jesus allowed His disciples to learn from their own mistakes.
- Learning through service experiences is key to the growth of the disciple.
- Christian teachers must stay current to effectively reach new disciples.

Introduction

In this last lesson, we are going to study the main methods and strategies that Jesus used in training His disciples. Some of His teaching methods had been used by the prophets and teachers before and contemporary to Jesus, but most of them were innovative.

Not for nothing is Jesus considered by scholars, Christian or non-Christian, to be the greatest teacher in human history. Although His ministry lasted only three and a half years, He not only transformed the people who had the privilege of listening to Him, but the impact of His teaching has reached us today and continues to influence the lives of millions of people in countless cultures around the world.

As we will see in this lesson, Christian teachers need to learn and put into practice these methods and strategies, since they are valid for all times, for all cultures and for all the groups we minister to in the church, from children to older adults.

From person to person

In this section, we will learn that Jesus' priority was people.



"The method of person-to-person discipleship is the most effective for the transformation and edification of the Christian; it is the method of Christ and can never be surpassed by the mass media" (Vargas Cruzado 1990, p.29-30).

People were always the most important thing in Jesus' ministry. That is why He dedicated time and personal care to them. Although the world around the church tends more and more to massification and dehumanization of the individual, this should always be the most important strategy of Christian discipleship.

Jesus' personal method of discipleship restores to human beings their intrinsic value as God's creatures and reflections of His glory. The church of the 21st century needs to recover this personalized discipleship and must learn to treat human beings as what they are according to God's vision. For Jesus, people were above His methods and strategies.

There is a big difference between seeing human beings as passive objects of the mission or seeing them as instruments of the mission. The value we place on people in the church depends on this vision.

Jesus knew that only the faithfulness of the disciples would give continuity to the mission of the church, which He was initiating (Jn. 17:6, 9, 20). His disciples were His strategy for the world to know Him (Coleman, 1972, p.20).

The contemporary church has at its disposal thousands of resources and methods to communicate the gospel and disciple people who respond to the Lord's call. However, none of them should be prioritized over person-to-person discipleship. The greatest investment of money, time and resources in the church should go to personal discipleship. "The method of person-to-person discipleship is the most effective for the transformation and edification of the Christian, it is the method of Christ and can never be surpassed by the mass media" (Vargas Cruzado, 1990, p.29-39).

One of the errors of the contemporary church is that the discipling process often begins with the multitudes (Coleman, 1972, p.25). This overemphasis on numbers has impoverished the church by failing to produce truly committed disciples. While the church neglected this strategy for centuries, other philosophies and religions expanded, using these principles that Jesus taught. The call to ministry is a call to reproduce the life of Christ in other people, and that cannot be done massively.

Coleman calls it the principle of "association", "...all Jesus did to teach these men His way was to keep them close to Him, and to be a school and syllabus for them" (1972, p.29). This presents a tremendous challenge to disciple-makers in the contemporary church, who will not be able to achieve this goal without living holy and transparent lives that are no more and no less than a mirror that faithfully reflects the life and ministry of the Lord.

Jesus allowed His disciples to examine Him so that they could understand the motivations that moved Him to act as He did. He was not bothered by their questions, He was never bored by their doubts, no matter how naive they might have been. John records that He was surprised that their questions did not harass Him (Jn. 13:36, 14:5 and 16).

He formed them into a group

Now, we will see the importance of relationships in discipleship groups.



Jesus chose His twelve, as mentioned above, from a very diverse group of people. It was not easy for them to integrate into a united group. In the gospels, they are frequently mentioned as being divided into three groups: on the one hand "...the most gifted men of striking personality, Peter, Andrew, James and John; then the thoughtful, contemplative, questioning, slow to believe, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew; the third group, the practical men who organized the finances and other details necessary for the whole group of companions" (Erdman, 1974, p.76).

Jesus used the method of group discipleship, which made it easier to bring out their differences, their ambitions, their character, their attitudes, their values and their motivations, that is, everything that needed to be reoriented according to the principles of the kingdom of God.

Briscoe rightly points out that the most effective discipleship takes place in groups. One of the problems of some contemporary churches is that believers do not develop as they should because of the lack of formative interaction with a group of disciples.



Problems of interpersonal relationships come to light through participation in a group and can be corrected. The possibility of learning from the example of others, from their attitudes, their reactions, is multiplied. The disciple's growth is accelerated and the area of social relationships, so important for perseverance in the church, is strengthened. Tolerance and respect are learned. The fruits of the spirit are exercised. The gifts are put into practice. The Word is reflected and applied together, which minimizes the possibilities of falling into prejudiced interpretations. Group discipleship multiplies, accelerates and enriches the learning experience (1990, p.219-220).

Based on experience

Now, let's look at how Jesus used experiences to teach.



Jesus' disciples were taught and disciplined through experiential experiences. As Briscoe states ... "they grew up in the midst of the activity of working among people...disciples are not made in the classroom" (1990, p.104). For Coleman, demonstration, delegation and supervision of the task at hand were important aspects of Jesus' strategy to lead them to maturity and, at the same time, for them to discover all that they could become (1972, p.59-83).

Juan Carlos Ortiz points out that although the church has made it a habit to disciple only with biblical studies, Jesus never did it this way: "We are concerned with what is related to information. Jesus, however, was concerned with formation. We need to learn from Him how to make disciples.... Jesus had the key to making disciples. He gave them concrete things to do rather than giving them information to store in their brains and the disciples obeyed His commands" (1978, p.125, 127).

Jesus allowed His disciples to learn from their own mistakes and the mistakes of others. But today there is resistance in some leaders to use this method for the following reasons:

- ✓ Fear of failure in a success-oriented society.
- ✓ Fear of competition, because there is a tendency to avoid risk.
- ✓ There is a preference for the tried and tested, for what can be easily manipulated. There is fear of being made to look foolish or incompetent.
- ✓ The false idea that the Master only accepts what is excellent (although excellence is achieved by learning from mistakes).

Examples of mistakes that Jesus allowed the twelve to make are found, for example, in Luke 9:28, when the disciples fell asleep, despite Jesus' request to pray all night. Briscoe explains that this error was due to their ignorance and excessive enthusiasm: "Thanks to the Lord, ignorance can be remedied and enthusiasm can be controlled and, by completing such exercises, a much more mature person results; but both exercises take time...

What are the great dangers in placing a person to serve in the church without preparation?

No one could accuse Peter of ignorance and apathy, but he did have the problems of ignorance and enthusiasm. Apathy never produces anything, but enthusiasm always achieves something, even if it is not the most desirable thing” (1990, p.117).

Other examples of errors allowed by the Master by His disciples are found in Luke 9:50 when they rebuke the one who cast out demons, and in Luke 9:54 when they wanted to make fire come down from heaven. These two were due to their lack of tolerance. In all cases, Jesus’ corrective action is immediate. If He had not been near them, they would surely have made greater mistakes.

At other times He sends them out alone but with precise instructions. They were to go and preach and heal, thus extending the reach of Jesus’ ministry. In the same way, He sends His disciples from all generations. Among the instructions given by Jesus in sending them out, the following may be listed:

1. He sent them on mission, assigned them specific service responsibilities and trusted them (Luke 9:1,2).
2. He affirmed them by encouraging them to believe in their potential: “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14, John 9:5).
3. He delegated power and authority to them (Luke 9:1).
4. He prepared them to face adversity and rejection (Luke 9:5, 10:3).
5. He taught them to depend on God’s provision for their physical needs (Luke 22:35, 36).

He aimed at the continued growth of the disciple

Now, we will see that Jesus taught the disciples to submit to God’s will.



In the past lessons, we have seen that without obedience, there is no growth in the Christian life. This attitude of continuous submission of the disciple is symbolically expressed in the Lord’s command: “take my yoke upon you” (Mt. 11:29).

In the contemporary church, it’s customary to teach new converts doctrine first and expect them to apply it to their lives on their own. But Jesus did not do so. In the formation of the first disciples, obedience to God’s will was above human understanding of the why of the commandments and God’s will.

As a teacher, Jesus demonstrated great patience and tolerance for the mistakes of His disciples as they went through the process of discipleship: “... To such men Jesus was willing to overlook many things that were born of their spiritual immaturity. He knew that they could overcome these defects as they grew in grace and knowledge. Their ability to receive revelation would grow as they continued to practice whatever truths they understood” (Coleman, 1972, p.43-44).

*“We are concerned about what is related to information. Jesus, however, was concerned about formation. We need to learn from Him how to make disciples...”...
“Jesus had the key to making disciples. He gave them concrete things to do instead of giving them information to store in their brains and the disciples obeyed His orders” (Ortíz, 1978, p.125, 127).*

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (Luke 10:3).

The church has sinned in considering faith and obedience as a fruit of rational understanding, which has resulted, as Coleman observes, in an indifference to the commandments of God (1972, p.47-48).

Jesus used obedience as a means for the growth of His disciples. Once a truth was taught, it was to be applied. However, “Jesus did not urge His disciples to surrender their lives to a doctrine, but to a person who was the doctrine, and only as they continued in His Word could they come to know the truth (Jn. 8:31,32)” (Coleman, 1972, p.44).

The purpose of many of Jesus’ miracles was to teach His disciples obedience as an act of faith. Examples are: the miraculous catch of fish (Lk. 5:1-11); the healing of the centurion’s servant (Lk. 7:1-10), the feeding of the five thousand (Lk. 9:10-17), and the woman healed on the Sabbath (Lk. 13:10-17). Also, some parables such as: the unfaithful servant (Lk. 12:41-48), the servant’s duty (Lk. 17:7-10), among others.

All Christian teachers have the capacity to be creative. Creativity has been captured with the image of God in human beings, but it is our decision to let it flow. Some teachers have it more developed because they have used it for longer, and that is why they dare more to try new things. Other teachers need to be encouraged to develop creativity and employ it in the ministry of teaching.

Effective teachers are dedicated to a few for a long time. It is not just teaching one class a week, but seeking them out, winning them, praying for them, preparing them, keeping them active, involved in the work, helping them to grow in their personal relationship with Christ and to bear one another’s burdens (Coleman 1972, p.85-103).

Creativity in teaching

To conclude, we will see that Jesus employed creative teaching methods.



Finally, we cannot fail to note the importance of the creative methods Jesus used in His teaching ministry. Jesus became an expert in the best methods of teaching. The teaching activities He employed were pre-planned, varied and very effective.

Undoubtedly, the Master was well prepared and equipped to perform this ministry. Due to the amount of His resources, He was able to face the different teaching situations that were presented to Him and with all kinds of people.

He used all the methods that are used today: questions, teacher’s conference, stories, conversations, discussions, dramas, objects, projects, demonstrations, among others. In addition, He followed a procedure, His introduction was direct; in development, His illustrations were well done and always included a conclusion where the main teaching was reinforced and challenged one to change.

Following His example, Christian teachers and disciple-makers must be creative, employing methods according to the contextual circumstances and taking advantage of all the available resources that technology offers us today. Those of us who have been called to be teachers and disciple-makers have the responsibility to constantly prepare ourselves, to keep up to date and to continue to be effective in reaching others.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Jesus was an expert teacher; His teaching and learning principles are the model for all teachers and disciples to follow. These include personalized discipleship, group learning, experiential learning experiences, an emphasis on growth-producing obedience, and the use of creativity.

Activities

Time



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In your own words, explain the advantages of being disciplined one-on-one and in a small group.

2. Think of an example of how you would give someone you disciple a ministry task following Jesus' process of demonstration, delegation and supervision.

3. In groups of 3-4, compare what you do in your church to train people to serve with Jesus' experience-based method. Evaluate your current method using the following chart.

Jesus-forming learning experiences	We don't do it.	Needs Improvement	Excellent
1. He sent them on mission, assigned them specific service responsibilities and trusted them (Luke 9:1,2).			
2. He affirmed them by encouraging them to believe in their potential: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14, John 9:5).			
3. He delegated power and authority to them (Luke 9:1).			
4. He prepared them to face adversity and rejection (Luke 9:5, 10:3).			
5. He taught them to depend on God's provision for their physical needs (Luke 22:35, 36).			

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- Significados. *Valores Morales (Moral Values)*. <https://www.significados.com/valores-morales/>

Final Evaluation

Time



COURSE: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Student name: _____

Church or Center where studied: _____

District: _____

Course Professor: _____

Date of this evaluation: _____

1. *Name one new thing you learned in this course about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.*

2. *List three or four changes that must occur in the lives of Jesus' disciples.*

3. *Briefly explain the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciple.*

4. *What did you learn in the ministerial practice of the course?*

5. *In your opinion, how could this course be improved?*

About this book

Biblical Foundations of Discipleship provides a study of the biblical theological foundations for the Christian discipleship ministry. It sets out the objectives and strategy of Jesus' transformative discipleship which should direct the work of the church. It develops central themes such as: discipleship and the kingdom of God, the commitment of the disciple, the change of mind and heart, the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian, the new life in Christ, among others.



The Author

Dr. Monica Mastronardi de Fernandez has served for over 40 years as a preacher, lecturer, educator, missionary, administrator and editor of books for various church ministries. She has written books in the area of discipleship, church development, holiness living and Christian education. Since 1995, she has lived in San Jose, Costa Rica, where she serves with her husband at the Nazarene Seminary of the Americas. They have two children and four grandchildren.

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