

I am aware that I am shaking the theology of many with this statement. We cannot “make disciples” of Jesus, contrary to the words that exist on the walls of many “churches” and preached from many pulpits. Disciples have a choice who they follow. A person must choose for themselves, whether to become a disciple or not.

No one can make a person to be a disciple of Jesus, a follower of Jesus. They must choose for themselves to become a disciple. Not every believer becomes a disciple. A true disciple of Jesus becomes a student of the Master by his or her choice. Our goal is not to have disciples that follow us, but who follow Jesus. It is Jesus who takes the choice we make, and begins to shape us into who He has designed us to be.

Before you decide to label me a heretic, let’s take a look at the verse in which we are all familiar. Most modern versions, including the New King James Version, say “make disciples of all the nations”.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19 (NKJV)

The New Century Version says it this way.

So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 (NCV)

Let’s take a look at the original King James Version.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Matthew 28:19 (KJV)

This phrase, “make disciples”, does not appear in the original King James and using a Lexicon reveals it does not appear in the original Greek. It has been translated this way in the modern translations. Many of the verses seem to indicate teaching and instructing people makes them a disciple.

Yes, the lexicon indicates that teach implies “making disciples”, but does it? We need to become critical thinkers and evaluate everything we read and hear through the Father’s heart. We can only do that, if we draw close enough to Father God to know and understand His heart. We need to look at what Jesus said about what a disciple really is.

Discipling is more than teaching. It is preparing a people to hear the voice of God for themselves. One cannot be a disciple without choosing to follow Jesus with a whole heart. A person can hear and be educated; they can be trained to act certain ways and do certain things, but are they truly a disciple?

Why is this seemingly moot point so important to understand? Because the Kingdom of God needs advanced in the earth. The Kingdom of God cannot be advanced without a mature Ekklesia who has become one with the Father and operates as the body of Christ with Jesus as the head. A mature Ekklesia can never be what Jesus wants without people becoming true disciples according to the standard Jesus set. True disciples need to see Jesus for who He really is, and that happens mostly through the

five gifts given to the Ekklesia by Jesus to illustrate who Jesus really is. Jesus is the true apostle, prophet, teacher, pastor and evangelist.

There needs to be a paradigm shift. We first need the five gifts to realize their true function by leading people to Jesus. When they see Jesus in us, hopefully they will desire to follow Jesus with a whole heart and they, themselves, will decide to become disciples. Today we believe we can “make disciples” by sending people to Bible schools or even “church” study groups, or Christian training centers where people are trained to go to the nations or to the streets to witness for Jesus.

We make disciples of our denominational doctrine. We make people into clones of our denominational or network leaders. We are taught to “do” instead of to “be”. This is NOT making disciples of Jesus. There is so much more to becoming a disciple of Jesus.

This is not by accident. This was designed by the enemy as a way to deceive God’s people into thinking they are fulfilling the great commission given by Jesus, when they are not. If the enemy cannot prevent a person from talking about Jesus and His Kingdom, then at least get him to talk about the things that will not make him strong.

Many leaders think if they train according to what they think is the right way (make disciples) then people will stay within the walls of the denomination or network of which they were made a disciple. If and when God speaks something different, they call it false doctrine from the enemy. True disciples seek truth.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; John 8:31 (KJV)

The word “believed” in the Greek means “to be committed to, having confidence in”. The Greek word translated as “continue” means to “abide, live”. When Jesus speaks about His Word, He is talking about Himself. He is the living Word. It is not talking about the Bible, although the Bible does contain the words that He spoke. If we continue hearing Jesus speak and continue to walk in His ways, we can be His disciple. It implies that we can hear His voice.

We are familiar with the next verse in this chapter and even often quote it.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32 (KJV)

These two verses go together. It is the truth which we know that makes us free. But truth can only be found by living in Jesus, the Word. In order to live there, we must hear His voice continually. Only then will we be a true disciple. There are no shortcuts. No person can make that choice for us. We cannot be trained to follow Jesus.

What is a disciple really? It is a pupil, a student, a follower, an apprentice. Our goal is not to make disciples to follow us, but to prepare a people to hear the voice of God for themselves and follow Him. A person must make their own decision to follow Jesus; we cannot make that decision for them. They have to decide they want to be a disciple, otherwise our teaching is in vain.

Our teaching will never produce a disciple, without the person deciding that they want to be a disciple. Our teaching will never make a person follow Jesus. Each individual must decide for themselves if they want to follow Jesus and it must be a decision that is followed every day.

In fact, Jesus says it this way:

And whoever does not bear his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:28 (MEV)

So likewise, any of you who does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:33 (MEV)

Sandwiched between these two verses from Luke, chapter fourteen, is the parable of building a tower and counting the cost.

Being a disciple is not about being poor, or giving up jobs, or relationships. It is not about doing great things for Jesus. It is not about studying scripture until we think we know everything there is to know about God. It is about counting the cost of becoming a disciple, with an understanding that means, being Christ-like.

It is about the willingness to lay our lives before our God, knowing of His great love for us, and understanding that He knows what is best for us. It is about living our lives in the heart of God versus us making our own decisions using our mind and emotions. Disciples live in the heart of God and want to know Him more. Their choice!

We teach, we show the way to Jesus, we prepare them with what Holy Spirit gives us, and then we trust Holy Spirit to create the desire to be a disciple in the hearts of the hearers. It is Jesus who takes disciples and molds them into His image, we lead people to Jesus. But people must choose to be a disciple or not. Jesus taught His disciples, but His teachings did not make them disciples. They chose to abide in His word, and have confidence in Him enough to follow Him and allow His words to bring truth to them. He called them to be disciples, but they chose to be disciples.

We must progress from believer to disciple to Ekklesia. We must progress from immaturity to maturity. We must progress from a slave and servant mentality to understanding our true identity as sons and daughters of the King. We only do this by abiding in Him continually and learning truth.

This is important because over time we have lost our focus, our purpose, the way of the Ekklesia as God had in His heart even before time began. When we “make disciples” we build our own stones (or bricks) to place in our own houses or ministries. We are supposed to prepare stones to know God not just to know about Him. When we truly know God, we hear His voice clearly and we want to follow Him. We choose to become a disciple.

Digging deeper into what the Bible has to say about disciples, we find the word “disciple” is only used in the four books of the gospel and the book of Acts.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they

assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch Acts 11:25,26 (KJV)

The writer of Acts doesn't say that believers were first called Christians, but disciples were. The word "Christian" means "followers of Christ, the Anointed One, imitators of Christ, Christ-like". When we decide to become a disciple, we are making a decision to become an anointed one just like our Anointed Messiah. We are determined to follow Jesus, and Him only, with all our heart, to become like Him. No one can make us into the image of our Savior. We must choose to be.

This is more than just doing what He says, or what others tell us Jesus would do. It is a deep knowing of Jesus and His ways, from experiencing His heart. The goal is to find our identity, not as a disciple, but as a son or daughter of the King. It is the difference between "doing" and "being". It is the difference between laboring for works' sake versus works born from a place of rest in the Father heart of God.

Let's take a deep dive into Ephesians chapter four. Paul is writing to the believers in Ephesus. Paul starts out the letter indicating the importance of understanding that there is only one God, one Spirit and only one BODY. He goes on to say that Jesus went back to heaven so that He could fill all things with Himself.

The goal of Jesus, as He sits on the throne in heaven, is to have ONE BODY with Him as the Head in order to fill all things with Himself. He must fill us in order to fill all things. He gave anointings of Himself to His people, five different giftings to help Him accomplish this task. That is the conversation Paul is having with this group of believers.

Jesus told His disciples before He left the earth that He was going to build His Ekklesia.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18 (MEV)

The word "build" in this passage comes from two Greek words put together. The first word means household or family and the second word means "build or establish". It wasn't a house that Jesus was building, He was establishing a family. That family would have His DNA and would look and act like Him. He gave these five anointings of Himself to His family to help prepare them to mature and learn to function together as a family, as the Ekklesia.

These five anointings, apostle, prophet, teacher, pastor and evangelist had the following tasks that would be accomplished through the anointing on their lives.

- Bring the disciples into maturity where they would live life according to the spirit not the flesh., when decisions were made by their spirit in coordination with Holy Spirit rather than their mind and emotions.
- Disciples would understand what it means to serve and minister to others, because they lived in the Father heart of God.
- The anointing being passed from these leadership gifts to the disciples would enable them to be edified as the body, the family of God. To edify means to

establish the family in what it means to have the DNA of Jesus and how to become like Him, to do what He does, to love like He does, to become strong in the knowledge of Jesus and who we are in Him.

These gifts are leadership gifts to disciples, those who have chosen to follow Jesus. Leaders do not lead from behind by driving people. They are not managers. They are people called by Jesus to lead others to see Jesus for who He really is and to prepare them to open their hearts to follow only Jesus. They do not force people to follow. They follow Jesus and others see the results of that and decide to follow until they learn to see and hear Jesus for themselves. Leadership goals are not to indoctrinate, but to lead others to see, hear and know Jesus for themselves.

True leaders never lead people to themselves, but rather to Jesus. How do I know we have failed at this? Ask most believers if they are confident that they hear the voice of God on a regular basis and my guess is around 90 percent would say no.

That is a cataclysmal statistic if it is accurate, and I believe it is and could be even higher. We are taught that those who hear voices are crazy. We are taught it is not normal. Leadership has failed the Ekklesia. We have failed to prepare a people to know their God, and to not only hear His voice, but desire it and hunger for it.

There are so many voices out there clamoring for our attention and our time. Leaders are afraid people will latch onto any one of those voices and call it God. Instead of leading people to understand the true heart of God, they become the voice of God for the people. This needs to change. You cannot hear the voice of God accurately without spending time in the heart of God getting to know your Heavenly Father daily.

The enemy knows how important the prophetic and apostolic leadership anointings are to the Ekklesia. He has done everything he can do to get us to misunderstand their role and to place our attention on man, rather than God. There is a lot of deception concerning these gifts today. All that glitters, is not gold.

We will discuss this further in future articles. It is important. The Kingdom of God is important to understand and there is a lot of wrong teaching out there in "Christian" circles about what it is. The gift most lacking today in believers is the gift of discernment, and yet it is the most needed. We cannot have discernment without the ability to hear the voice of God accurately. We cannot hear the voice of God accurately on a regular basis without living in His presence, His heart, the Holiest of Holies.

If we cannot have discernment without living in the Father's heart, then we cannot understand the true Kingdom of God either. We cannot understand the true Kingdom of God without understanding the true Ekklesia, for it is the true Ekklesia that is the vehicle that advances the Kingdom of God in the earth.

We cannot discern and understand the true Ekklesia, if we do not understand the purpose for the true apostles and prophets and the anointing to prepare us as individuals to follow Jesus and hear His voice, so we can be placed by Jesus in the true Ekklesia, His body, His family. Without discernment we will continue to view ourselves as slaves or servants and never come into the full understanding of our identity as true sons and daughters of God. When we understand who we are, we

understand our place in the Ekklesia. Then, we can effectively advance the Kingdom of God.

This is a decision we must make for ourselves. No one can make us into a true disciple with a heart to find God's heart. No one can make us hear the voice of God. No one can make us follow God. God won't even make us. Will you trust God every day to make His voice clear to you? Will you desire to do whatever He tells you to do every day? Will you choose to be a disciple of Jesus? It is a challenge, but it is a challenge worth taking! The choice is yours!

