

DISCIPLESHIP IS....

By Bob Young

[Eight lessons that provide a fresh look at discipleship development. Introductory lesson plus seven outlines]

In this series, we will take a fresh look at the Gospel story with a focus on one great truth – accepting Jesus as our Master and Teacher alters the way we live. What does it mean to be a disciple? Using the words of the New Testament words, teachers have students and masters have disciples. If we are serious about being Jesus' followers or disciples, we must answer his call and claim on our lives. This series studies seven concepts that flesh out the biblical description of discipleship. After an introductory overview, I will unwrap these concepts over the next seven weeks.

Discipleship requires -- Choosing, Listening, Obeying, Imitating, Committing, Connecting, Sharing.

-1- CHOOSING. I have to make a choice. Who will be my master? Choosing a master means I completely give up control of my life. When we talk about “being a Christian,” often the understanding is that it depends on us. “Being a disciple” makes clear that my life depends on my relationship with my master. I choose new priorities. Since Jesus has all authority, no one else can better instruct me, guide me, protect me. Who will be my master? I have to make a decision!

-2- LISTENING-LEARNING. As a disciple, I must listen to the Master, I must learn how to listen. I must listen to learn. How can a disciple listen to Jesus? Students listen to their teacher. Here is a primary question—since I have chosen Jesus as my master, am I really listening to Jesus?

-3- OBEYING. Obedience is key. Synonyms like yielding and submitting help us understand obedience. The teacher understands the pitfalls, the problems. Listen, obey. Jesus has the answers. The disciple follows the instructions of the Master. Am I willing to let him have control -- to lift my burdens, solve my problems, and correct my course?

-4- IMITATING. Students learn and teach what the teacher teaches. Students speak the words of the teacher. Disciples become like their Master. Following Jesus means we are imitators. We become like Jesus by changing our nature (not through masks, the basic meaning of the word “hypocrisy”). Disciples—followers—imitators, what a challenge! Do I look like Jesus? Do I do what he did? Are his values my values? His goals my goals? Am I an authentic disciple?

-5- COMMITTING. By definition, disciples are “all in.” No half-hearted discipleship! The word “Christian” has become impotent. We hear talk about uninvolved Christians, non-attending Christians. Impossible! Discipleship is whole-hearted—by definition!

-6- CONNECTING. Students who enjoy the same teacher spend time together—camaraderie, talking about the teachings, focused on points of commonality. Disciples spending time together because they are disciples—remembering, sharing, encouraging, focused on what unites them. A bane of the modern church—too many “church” activities that say nothing about and have nothing to do with our common faith and allegiance! The earliest disciples assembled specifically—time, activities, why, how. The church has a lot of learn. Many churches have redefined the connections that disciples share.

-7- SHARING. A primary characteristic of disciples—a disciple makes other disciples. If I am not actively involved in making other disciples, I must ask myself if I am an authentic disciple.