

A Disciple's Handbook

By - Charles Pinkney

[Mystery of God's Power - PDF FILE:](#)

[How all believers may receive](#)

['The Promise of the Father'](#)

[Through the Holy Spirit](#)

FELLOWSHIP
the body in union

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Paul Defines the Apostolic Emphasis

In chapters one and two of his first letter to Corinth Paul presses a very important foundation point. This particular emphasis stresses the difference between a Spiritual (supernatural) message contrasted to a conceptual one. In chapter 1 verse 17 he states that his gospel emphasis is not based upon words of human wisdom but in power generated from heaven where Jesus is enthroned. It was at the cross of Jesus' crucifixion where the exchange of righteousness was made. The cross of crucifixion is where the sacrifice was made. The cross of crucifixion is where God paid the price in blood for every sinner. This doctrine of the cross does not end with a man's death but with a divinely-powered resurrection. Thus the doctrine that Paul speaks of includes the death and the resurrection of Jesus. It was Jesus who was crucified, dead, buried and resurrected. The holiday we call Easter fulfilled the Passover, Unleavened bread and First Fruits. It is truly unfortunate that so few Christians understand the Jewish roots of Christianity, including the fact that Jesus (Yeshua) and most all of the first disciples and apostles were Jews. Yeshua rose from the dead, *ascended on high, took captivity captive, and gave gifts to all who would believe*. Paul's statement of the cross addresses victory, not sorrow or loss. The resurrection speaks of *the power of an endless life laying a foundation of that inheritance for all believers*. It tells about the Father's plan to extend grace and peace to every man, woman and child. It speaks about the ability to *become a new creation in Christ*.

Kingdom of God Versus Human Wisdom Paul, in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, introduces the theme of "wisdom." Paul contrasts human wisdom to divine wisdom. He explains that a man who deems himself wise through power of reason, struggles to accept the wisdom of God. God's wisdom is framed in paradoxes and conundrums. For example the paradox of the least being the greatest; the weak being the strong; the first being last; the wise being foolish; the living being dead; while the dead are being awakened to live. If these concepts make any sense to you, perhaps God has already opened your eyes in a very significant way. God framed truth in such a way that when they sound preposterous, unbelievable and irrational and become a stumbling block for many who are worldly-wise. The

world says, "Be someone, do your own thing, express your individuality." God says, "Decrease your self importance, take your cross. We are told to let the outward "you" be crucified so that the Spirit of Christ can have effective sanctuary and expression in you.

The scientific mind requires proof. The eye measures and discerns the things which we call real or reality. Yet Christians are entreated to disregard outward manifestations the objectified world. The mind is not the highest faculty to lead and direct. **Sons or daughters of God are led by the Spirit**, (Romans 8:14 -- For as many as are led by the Spirit of God- -", these sons of God." Where spiritual truth is concerned the only reliable and eternal truth is the Word of God.

Accessing God's truth requires **faith** on our part. Paul, in the same letter talks about how to make Spiritual realities manifest. "*I did not come teaching and preaching with enticing words of man's wisdom but with demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand upon man's wisdom but upon the power of God.* (1Corinthians 2:4,5) The Spiritual life only begins to manifest because of the *grace* of God. It is actually God who gives us the ability to act in faith.

The gospel states with respect to the Kingdom of God that we are all *pressing into it*. (Luke 16:16) The Lord stands at the door knocking, the action of faith opens that door to him. Again, grace is the initiatory cause, it is God's hand in matters concerning our life that stirs, directs and empowers. Grace is the hand of God outstretched to us, beckoning; he bids us to come forth. We respond to him and we press in to the world of Spiritual life that awaits. The hand of grace is outstretched in love. Grace speaks in the voice of love, kindness, compassion and giving. This love is caring and constructive in nature. Love builds and empowers the body to grow. Love builds the bonds of those who come together to share their faith experience. Love, not knowledge defines the character and the parameters of the spiritual life. There is always a knowledge component involved in studying God's word. But from mere information, precepts grow as the Spirit of God gives 'understanding' and connectivity to the whole of scripture. Scripture reminds us that knowledge alone ultimately has the affect of "puffing up" our egos. We find that knowledge without compassion becomes a deficit. We will always find that the "knowledge" aspect of Christianity is closely linked to "religious systems." In the religious realm knowledge and expertise defines God knowledge and not so much personal revelation that the Spirit of God provides in the study of the word of God.

How much do we have to know before we become Spiritual?

I describe that the Apostle Paul emphasizes the power that God provides. Activation in all spiritual matter derives through Christ Jesus' Spirit. This spirit is given to empower our lives and relationships.

The attribute of spiritual relationships within the body of believers lies closer to the center of Spirituality than any other factor. The koinonia, fellowship and relationship of believers becomes the life of the body of Christ on earth. In order to glimpse the New Testament church of the Book of Acts, "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread, and with prayer.*" (Acts, Chapter 2:42) The apostles who knew the way of God in the richest measure served to guide novices into the same area of common experience. By witnessing through first hand experience; the community grew dynamically. The Kingdom of God expands in their regions gaining more and more converts. A community grows and stands in the midst of a world of unbelief, carnality, and unrighteousness.

God calls us into a family-like community in which *God is not only glorified but in which God*

continuously interacts with the disciples of this community. Genuine affection and fellowship is what this community is about. This 'family' is characterized by sharing the joy of redemption (salvation is the first step in pressing into this community.) This intimate fellowship of believers is the closest thing to heaven God has for us on earth. We share a common mind, a common testimony, a common hope. We are baptized into one Spirit into a common destiny. This community is redemptive owing to the fact that deceptions that tarnish this world can not endure in the presence of the Living God, neither can the things which defile the flesh stand in his presence. We welcome those who enter this community of faith where we find restoration, strength and edification. We come together in fellowship to repair the bumps, bruises, and blemishes that life in this world inflicts upon those who are "*not of this world.*"

The life of that body is 'organic' and natural. It is not defined by laws of human organization or the dogmatic requirements of religion. The only limitation is defined by the authenticity of the personal redemption that is experienced by each. There are always a few who are masquerading as believers who try to maintain their own natural lives. The natural man (without the Spirit) values matters which are at odds with the God life.

God chooses a diversity of human gifts and abilities

As we gather in the body we soon realize that there are so many different life experiences. These display the diversities of gifts and abilities. There needs to be a welcoming of these unique gifts that these individuals offer. We are not meant to be like another. However, the path to discipleship is a long and gradual process. Some progress more quickly owing to the grace of God. During the continuous process of discipleship we must be open and teachable. We need to respect the mature and seasoned in matters spiritual. Spiritual experience among the mature may be broad enough to demonstrate a total range of spirituality and anointings. See Romans Chapter 12; 1Corinthians 12; and 1Corinthians 14, and Ephesians 4. We are reminded that Paul is so bold to admonish his own disciples to "imitate him as he imitates" Christ Jesus.

To summarize:

Learning Christ according to the Apostles Doctrines requires

To be spiritually renewed by faith in Jesus Christ

To receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit

To renew your mind by studying scripture

To seek personal fellowship of God

To seek the fellowship of God's family - - where your loved and valued

To imitate those who have mature spirituality

To walk in faith, (the knowledge that God cares for us in our present moment)

To minister to others, the same gifts and wholeness that we have received from God

THE POWER OF PARADIGMS

An Introduction

The essential questions asked by philosophers:

Thinkers and sages attempt to bring their best insight and understanding to these questions:

"Who are we?

Where do we come from?

Where are we going?

Where do we go to seek wisdom and the answers to the secrets of life?

Do we inquire according to secular wisdom, or religious teachings? Or is there another?

How does Godly Wisdom contrast to secular wisdom?

How does Godly Wisdom contrast with "religious" wisdom?

Godly Wisdom secular wisdom?

Contrast Godly Wisdom to "Religious" Wisdom!

THE PARADIGM OF WORLDLY WISDOM

Worldly wisdom extols and rewards self-exaltation and individuality Godly wisdom (the Truth) says deny yourself take up your cross, die to yourself. In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom no man is "good" Worldly wisdom is based upon observation and the appearance of things Godly wisdom (the Truth) The unseen things are eternal and have a substance yet to be known by human reason.

Worldly wisdom is based upon "scientific" principle and measurable phenomena. Godly wisdom (the Truth) teaches that if you believe in the unseen you have faith and will see the results manifested.

Worldly wisdom features the domination or rule of the strong and the mighty. Godly wisdom (the Truth) teaches that God chooses the weak and the insignificant to shame the wise and strong. Worldly wisdom devalues humans with few assets, childlike meekness and simplicity. Godly wisdom (the Truth) reveals that the greatest in the kingdom of God are like children. Humble, trusting, and meek.

Worldly wisdom values and rewards intellectual achievement and scholarship. Godly wisdom (the Truth) teaches that the wisdom of man is foolishness to him.

Worldly wisdom recognizes classes as inferior or superior rank and class, this is respect of persons. Godly wisdom (the Truth) teaches that those who are poor shall eventually receive the blessings of the kingdom. The proud and the mighty he scatters and turns away.

Worldly wisdom's view of the "vast timeless universe" diminishes or negates the need of a savior. Godly wisdom (the Truth) teaches that God created the heaven and the earth by wisdom and all things that are in it. And he called his creation "good."

Worldly wisdom features "self preservation" as a principle Godly wisdom (the Truth) speaks of self sacrifice as a divine virtue

Worldly wisdom believes life may well be over when one dies Godly wisdom (the Truth) we are eternal beings who retain our own soul's personal identity forever. Some will inherit eternal blessings and others will inherit eternal separation from God.

Worldly wisdom presumes that God regards each religion or faith democratically. Godly wisdom (the Truth) reveals that one nation is the chosen people of God. The Bible established upon infallible promises, states that there is only one mediator between God and man. Jesus the son of God, the king of the Jews.

Worldly wisdom presumes that God does not favor any one nation over another. Godly wisdom (the Truth) reveals that one nation is the chosen people of God. There is only one mediator between God and man. Jesus the son of God, the king of the Jews.

Worldly wisdom would suggest if there is a God he is simply called by many names. Godly wisdom (the Truth) though there are many gods there is but one God who is above all and we can hold no god higher than He.

Worldly wisdom presumes that God is essentially impersonal. Godly wisdom (the Truth) says

that we can become sons of God. Adapted into the family. We are called to inherit the blessings and partake in His divine nature.

Worldly wisdom believes that all of the human race are automatically "children of God" Godly wisdom (the Truth) Whoever believes on the Son of God, Jesus Christ has eternal life. Whoever has not the son has no life but the condemnation of God remains upon them.

! Worldly wisdom is Self Directed, It extols and rewards self exaltation and individuality.

! Worldly wisdom is focused on acquiring, having and getting.

! Worldly wisdom is based upon observation and the natural appearance of things.

! Worldly wisdom is based upon "scientific" principle and measurable phenomena.

! Worldly wisdom is not likely to believe in spirit beings who are unseen.

! Worldly wisdom tends to believe that the human race is evolving and becoming more enlightened.

! Worldly wisdom features the domination or rule of the strong in mind and body and devalues childlike meekness and simplicity.

! Worldly wisdom rewards those with leadership personal strength, intellectual achievement and scholarship.

! Worldly wisdom recognizes classes of humanity denoting some to be of inferior or superior rank and class.

! Worldly wisdom's view of a 'vast universe' or "infinite time" diminishes or negates the need of a savior.

! Worldly wisdom features self preservation survival of the fittest.

! Worldly wisdom allows that life may well be over when one dies.

! Worldly wisdom reasons that if we are not "caught" there is no consequence.

! Worldly wisdom presumes that if there is a divinity that each religion or faith be valued democratically

! Worldly wisdom would suggest there is one God who is simply called by other names.

! Worldly wisdom presumes that God is essentially impersonal.

! Worldly wisdom believes that all of the human race are automatically 'children of God'

1Cor:1:19: For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (KJV) 1Cor:1:21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (KJV) 1Cor:2:14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (KJV)

The Paradigm of Religious Wisdom

All formal religions feature some if not all of the following descriptions of the way they minister the Truth of God to people. In the religious paradigm the religious life occurs in or centers around a 'church house.' In the religious paradigm the church house is called "the house of God" In the religious paradigm traditions include various church features or components such as:

FOLLOWING ARE TRADITION ELEMENTS FAMILIAR TO RELIGIOUS CHRISTIANITY
pulpits and pews

stained glass windows
organs and "sacred music"
solemnity and formalism
robes and apparel
orders of worship
catechisms
rituals and ceremonial routines
ranks of credentialed authority
priest hood, who meet with God for us
paid clergy
human oversight and approval

In the religious paradigm a formally trained priest or clergy "officiates" over the "services"

In the religious paradigm a formal address or sermon is called "preaching"

In the religious paradigm one or two hours a week fulfill requirements of personal involvement

In the religious paradigm only the clergy are the only ones qualified to "minister"

In the religious paradigm there is disparity due to "respect of persons" in spiritual rank / authority

In the religious paradigm members may be totally disassociated from worship or prayer

In the religious paradigm God was glorious and supernatural in times past but not today

In the religious paradigm a person's spiritual life is governed, directed or sustained by another

In the religious paradigm the exploits of God and Saints occurred only in the past

In the religious paradigm people are taught how to please God by performing deeds or obligations In the religious paradigm one often does not experience God but hears about God

In the religious paradigm one often does not know if he/she is saved and heaven-bound

In the religious paradigm Bible doctrine plus traditional teachings form the core doctrines

The Paradigm of Godly Wisdom, (Modeled by Jesus)

Jesus' Spirit-led model of wisdom presents paradoxes to natural instincts or wisdom of man; the least shall be greatest in the kingdom; greatest are servants, etc.

- God presents humanity with paradoxes like; the first shall be last;
- mankind through natural ability and understanding can not come to God or know God
- many called but few chosen;
- we must die to our selves in order to fully live;
- we must not value, love or seek the rewards only in this world;
- we must be like a child, open, teachable, and innocent, not trusting in our own abilities
- God has hidden wisdom from the wise; personal brilliance does not equate to Spiritual wisdom
- the Kingdom of God is unseen but, for the faithful, a greater reality than that which is seen.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, man is not essentially good but fallen, and unredeemed;
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, mankind is born outside of God's favor
- Unredeemed man is under the ruler of Satan, the god of this world

- The race of humanity is under the limitations of a "curse" which has been in effect since Adam and Eve
- A human being can be recreated by God's power and be changed his innermost nature
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, the focus is upon others and serving.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom no man is good (approaching Godliness).
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom a natural man can do nothing of *eternal* value.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, the spiritual man is totally dependent upon the guidance of the Spirit.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, the body is the temple of the Spirit of God.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom we are in a perpetual spiritual battle for survival and dominance in life.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom there is eternal life beginning with the moment of Salvation
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom the Kingdom of the Heavens is ours with promised rewards
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom there are consequences for words spoken and deeds done.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom only those born of the Spirit and led of the Spirit are the children of God.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, God rewards with wisdom those whose hearts are right toward him.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom all disciples are called, matured and charged with ministry.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom ministry is directed by the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom true worshipers worship in Spirit and in Truth.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, Truth and wisdom is hidden from the double minded and the unredeemed.
- In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom we could memorize the Bible and not fully understand truth - only the Spirit reveals heavenly things.

Paradigm of Religious Wisdom

In the religious paradigm the religious life centers around a "church house"

In the religious paradigm the church house is called "the house of God"

In the religious paradigm the church building is called the "Church"

In the religious paradigm traditions include various church features or - -

traditions such as: pulpits and pews, stained glass windows, organs and 'sacred music' solemnity and formalism, ecclesiastical garb robes, orders of service, ritual, - - designated ranks of clerical authority.

In the religious paradigm a formally trained priest or clergy "officiates" over the "services"

In the religious paradigm a formal address or sermon delivered to the faithful is called "preaching"

In the religious paradigm one or two hours a week meets the requirements of personal involvement In the religious paradigm only the professionally trained clergy are qualified to "minister"

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Paradigm of Godly Wisdom, (Modeled by Jesus)

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom there are paradoxes to the natural instincts or wisdom of man

the least shall be greatest;

the first shall be last;

many called but few chosen;

we must die in order to live;

we must hate the things of this world;

we must be like a child, God has hidden wisdom from the wise;

the unseen things are a greater reality than the seen. etc.

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom man in his natural self can do nothing of value for the kingdom of God

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, the spiritual man is totally dependant upon the guidance of the Spirit

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom we are in a perpetual spiritual battle for survival and dominance in life

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom there is eternal life, promised rewards and consequences

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model Jesus preached to those outside pertaining to the Kingdom of God and taught his followers

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom only those who are born of the Spirit and led of the Spirit are the Children of God

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom people are disciplined, disciples are matured and then charged with ministry

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom ministry is through the leading of the Holy Spirit

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom true worshipers worship in Spirit and in Truth

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom, wisdom and insight is hidden from the double minded and the unredeemed

In the Jesus, Spirit-led model of wisdom we could memorize the Bible and not know truth- only the Spirit reveals it.

WHEN WE GATHER AS A BODY (KOINONIA)

The eternal purpose of the triune God was to expand that triune intimacy to the human race. Jesus prays his intention to that end in his priestly Prayer to Father God, (recorded in John 17.) We achieve fellowship in God as when that Word that takes root in us. Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. They walked at his side, talked with him, and were both witnesses and partakers of his spiritual ministry. They new his voice; saw his power; and

marveled at his wisdom. They new him! Though I fear that few nominal Christians are able to say they know him. Yes we have heard some things about him, but do we know him? Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we may not only know him, but have fellowship with him even to the extent that we can partake in his nature and his ministry. In the gathering of believers in a place of meeting can we say that we leave that meeting, knowing him better? Today can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or were Empowered by his touch?

ARE ALL BELIEVERS CALLED TO MINISTER?

Ministry Edifies, strengthens, and blesses. God gives each human being potential and promise with gifts and a field of influence in the world according to his own measure of Grace. These gifts may or may not be focused upon ministry to an tradition church body (as in church centered pulpit ministry.) The gifts of God are designed to bring glory to God in any setting. When members of the ecclesia (the called out ones) come together whether few or many it is to exhibit the gifts and to edify one another in a community of affection and sharing.

It would be good for religious eyes to see what things can and do happen in a New Testament meeting. God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts and broken relationships and save peoples souls.

Church liturgy began to be put together in the 3rd or 4th century of the 'church' age. The formalizing of service into ritual occluded the kind of glorious liberty and fellowship known in the days of the apostles. Who knows what were the motivating intentions behind formalism. Perhaps it was the purpose of preserving some of the truth or glory of those earlier days. Maybe they wished to insure the manifestation of God's presence and to provide a platform to disciple those who needed to understand the truth of Christ's eternal ministry.

The Bible shows that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of Old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed it was gone they were left, as in the case of Mose's brazen serpent, with a lifeless idol. The temple remained but God's presence was gone. Whether God's glory and fellowship remains with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. Yes, through the years, churches preserved catechism, but remained but the glory had been lost. The ritual remained and the liturgical trappings remained but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth the glory of God through faith.

Elements preserved by the Roman church substituted mystery and iconography for God's presence. "Ministry" became the focus of a very small body of liturgical experts, called the priesthood or the clergy, when it was always to be the domain of every believer. Just as God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest, he wishes us to become a *true worshipper*. What is a true worshipper and what does it mean to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. He looks at the hearts and determines sincere devotion and thankfulness. He does not regard the man with the religious more highly than a common person whose heart is open. He does not favor a cathedral over another location whether a meadow or humble home. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, it is not where you worship, *not upon this mountain or another mountain*, but what and how we worship. He said to her that some *do not know what they are even worshipping* but the truth is that salvation is connected to worship, it is through the foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, *when men and women women would worship the Most High God in the Spirit of Holiness*. Those who do not have this Spirit can not have the

authentic and true revelation and witness of God.

DISCIPLING

Disciples, Learn the "Way of God"

The foundation of the life of Christ is laid by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Just as he made disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) The Christian world through religion has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal. It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious folk heroes. The sense of their being our brothers, sharing the same life of trials and faith has been all but lost. In our minds Bible days were another time, another faith, another dispensation. This is not the case. Religious tradition places men on pedestals and this should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show *respect of persons*.

Every Believer Becomes a Disciple -
*Expressed in Matthew's description of Christ's
GREAT COMMISSION 28:19*

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT JUST ABOUT PARTAKING OF THE LIFE OF GOD BUT TO PARTAKE IN THE MINISTRY OF Yeshua (JESUS)

KOINONIA: SHARING, COMMUNICATING, AND PARTAKING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to both know him and follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. During the Lord's earthly ministry, they walked at his side, spoke with him, and were both witnesses and **partakers** of his Spiritual ministry. They knew his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. On a strictly physical level they knew him! This was not considered adequate for these original disciples and were exhorted to receive an additional supernatural empowerment (Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from above- -) in order to demonstrate and build the Kingdom of God. Today I suspect that few nominal Christians are able to say they know Jesus on a personal level. Yes, although they have heard *about* him and have studied doctrines or teaching, how much do they know him in the power of his love and in the power of his resurrection?*

Perhaps the most astonishing thing revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only **may know him**, but that we may have both fellowship with him **and partake** in his divine nature and *in his ministry*. When we gather as believers at any particular place of meeting can we say as we leave that meeting knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or have been empowered by his touch?" **1 Peter 4:10,11** defines God's idea of the importance of sharing the gift that is unique to each believer for indeed each has received a gift or many gifts to be shared from his or her life. Tradition has had the negative effect of barring or at least, discouraging the ordinary believer from ministry even though apostolic scripture consistently prohibits this.

We are exhorted as believers to mature. We are not to remain a novice, a baby in the faith, but that we are exhorted to attain "unto the stature of a 'mature man' even the stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4). The exaltation of a single voice in the role of authority **to disciple** us may be limited and limiting. Pulpit ministry is an unfortunate self-perpetuating legacy of 17 centuries of the "Church" age. Those who in fact have experience in Christ's life and ministry, made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit have a title in the Word of God; these individuals are called "**elders**." Certainly church denominations use this same term within some context of

their doctrines. But those who Jesus calls elders may differ from what religious traditions might label as elders. The apostle John, the disciple who Jesus loved, begins his letter by talking about Spiritual **experience** as the qualification (credentials) that we must look to and lean upon. He noted what he had seen, touched, looked upon, and handled in the Word of life. *(1John1:1)That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, these things we declare unto you - -;*

True fellowship is elusive and hard to achieve since religious traditions tends to condition us to quite a different picture of church life. The very form of the clergy dominated church house builds a picture of individuals ranked and separated by pulpits and ranks of pews. Formality and program diminishes our sense of intimacy and feeling of accord. Correction long established tradition is almost impossible to correct, unless we have had personal revelation or have maybe survived some control and abuse that has sounded and alarm. For we are to have the same Spirit that is Christ's and "- say the same thing - ", endeavoring that there be no schisms, walls, or disharmony among us. * *(1Cor. 1:10,11)*

Ministry Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

Discipling pertains to the edification and maturing of the body Christ. This need not be the formal sort of ministry experienced as the normal Saturday or Sunday fare in a typical congregation. In the form presented by the apostles it is the living, pure, peaceable, and entirely informal sharing of the life of Christ and the acknowledgment of the revelation of the Word of Truth, among believers. We pass through various stages as we grow. Just as in the natural, we begin as babies, then children, the strong young 'men', then mature sages expressing the character and spiritual nature of Jesus Christ. So is it in the matter of Spiritual growth. The Bible shows how we each are called to **minister our individual Spiritual gifts to one another.** *(Rom.12; 1Cor.12. 1 Cor. 14, and 1Pet 4:11)*

The proper and best time to edify and grow with one another is when believers come together in koinonia (fellowship). When two or more true believers get together the natural result is to share their common salvation and to have "fellowship" to share or minister "edification" to each other. When two or more gather, Jesus joins them and becomes a co-participant! This fellowship process is not complicated, and the least formal the better. If there are leadership gifts, this should not result in domination by one individual to take authority over others. It is not adversarial. Discipleship happens as we share the several gifts given to each believer. Koinonia is about participation, communication and sharing. It begins with actual experiences given as a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection. It is about the revelation of Christ within each person and how he is living through our lives and doing his work through us. **Koinonia is about sharing what Christ has given to each believer and ministering that gift to others.**

Individuals have various of testimonies and experiences from day to day. Some have more of this, some less depending on the pressures of life. There may be some with musical gifts with which enhance worship, and of course some have less of that ability. Some may have verbal skills, some less. Some with practical kinds of skills, some not so much. Some may be working through personal tragedies or rejection, while others have already had healing in these areas. All need to be encouraged to participate at some level so that **leadership skills** may be fostered in each. At times of spiritual fellowship, mundane issues and distracting chit-chat kinds of conversations are distractions. But this is not to say that questions can't be

shared about the pressures and problems of living can not be shared among the fellowship and become a source of teaching or a subject of prayer.

The dynamics of fellowship changes from week to week as fewer or more people are present at a house or meeting place. I believe fellowship should never turn into something that is impersonal or formalistic. However it can become that especially when everything is controlled by one person. Those unfamiliar with such kinds of fellowship need to experience what things can and do happen in a place of meeting where the Spirit of God is given liberty! God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts, heal broken relationships and save a person's soul. The Holy Spirit administers just such actions. (See link to [Why We Gather](#))

JESUS MINISTRY IS A MODEL TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

Disciples, Practice and Learn the "Disciples Way"

The foundation of the life of Christ is laid by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Just as Jesus set about making disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) The Great Commission is about discipleship. Too often, the Christian world has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal through religion . It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious super heroes. It is too easy to lose the sense that Peter, James, Paul and Barnabus and the host of others are our brothers and our teachers. Though now having run their race, they shared the same life of trials and faith as we ourselves. In our minds Bible days were entirely another time, another kind of faith life , another dispensation. This is not the case. Religious tradition places men on pedestals. This should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons. s many that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace

You may be interested in checking out the writing of Frank Viola and George Barna [See www.ptmin.org](#) and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to open, house church. 1Peter: 4-11 (any that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the 'many faceted' Grace of God)

The encroachment of formalism

A Religious spirit in the form of domination, control or formalism, continuously stalks the believer with the aim of transforming God-life into **dead religion**. Church liturgy was put together in times past, perhaps following just after the kind of glorious fellowship described above. Liturgical forms may have started with good intentions with the hope of bottling up something very good and worthwhile, perhaps to preserve some of the glory of an earlier day. If only God's manifest presence could be captured and preserved, but alas it can not. He is moving on as the pillar of cloud moved ahead directed the sojourners in the wilderness in the book of Exodus.

The Bible demonstrates that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed it was gone they were left with a lifeless object (an idol.) The temple remained, the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained, but the manifestation of its power was gone. A cistern remained, the fount of living water was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. With passing years catechism remained but the glory had been lost. The ritual enactments remained and the liturgical trappings but the presence of

God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth God's 'glory' through waiting upon Him in faith.

As God's presence leaves it is replaced by religion. Elements and doctrines that remain are a substitute for God's presence. "Ministry" follows a similar transition. Leadership becomes the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts. It has come to pass that the priesthood or the clergy only is trained and authorized to govern and rule over the flock of God. But in the new covenant as it was presented to the saints, discipleship is the domain of every believer.

Here is a paradigm re-think: Abolish the Laity! God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest, just as he wishes each of us to become **a true worshiper**.

What is this true worshiper and what is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. Any one other than "true worshipers" fall short in worship. The natural mind is not accustomed to partaking in heavenly things. *These are strangers in the inner court of the temple*. Our Heavenly Father looks at the hearts he does not regard the man who is adorned with the outward regalia of religious uniform over any common believer whose heart is open.

The natural temple or cathedral is not the place of meeting. Our Father does not favor a cathedral over a Holy dwelling site inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, (It is not about where you worship,) not upon this mountain or another mountain, “**-we worship what we KNOW!**” Many *do not know what they are worshipping*. The truth is that worship is inseparable from salvation. Salvation is through the root and foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Almighty God in Spirit. Those without this Spirit receive nothing of the revelation and fellowship of God of which Jesus spoke. A divine meeting place for the first priest hood was a place behind the veil into the presence of God where no human could stand without having been made pure by scrupulous preparation. In the presence of God man does not utter a word nor risk the defilement of his own sweat.

NEXT CHAPTER

E Book 1:

[The Gospel Without Religion](#)

E Book 2:

[A Disciples Handbook](#)

E Book 3:

[Mysteries in the Bible](#)

[All Charles Pinkney Titles](#)