

A Disciple's Handbook

2

Every Believer Becomes a Disciple - Matthew 28:19

As many that have received the gift, minister it to one another,
as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God
1Peter4:10

FELLOWSHIP OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTION

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT PARTAKING IN THE LIFE OF GOD AND
THE MINISTRY OF YESHUA (JESUS)

**SHARING, COMMUNICATING,
AND PARTAKING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Disciples Are Partakers In The Life and Character of Jesus

You Can Become Part of God's Family

*Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has provided a way for us to come to the Father, to know him, and to follow him. The original twelve disciples followed him during the Lord's earthly ministry, they walked at his side, conversed with him, and were both **witnesses** to and **partakers** of his Spiritual ministry. They knew his voice; witnessed his power and authority; and marveled at his wisdom. On a strictly physical level they knew him! Nevertheless this was not considered adequate to qualify these original disciples to bring the gospel to the world. They were exhorted to receive a supernatural empowerment which was "the promise of the Father." "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from above- -." This is the empowerment that would demonstrate and build the Kingdom of God. In the Christian world today I suspect that too few nominal Christians are able to say they know him on a *Spiritual level*. Yes Christians today are familiar with the name of Jesus the Christ, We hear his name mentioned in sermons, have studied some Biblical doctrines and teachings; but how much do we truly know the power of his love and in the power of his resurrection? Paul*

teaches us that the **Gospel** is about Christ's power directed to us! Without the manifestation of the *dunamis power* of God we would have another an incomplete gospel.

Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only **may know God's True Son**. We may not only know him but have 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 because we have witnessed his presence? Can we say that we have heard his voice, or have been empowered by his touch?" **1 Peter 4:10,11** one of my most essential scriptural foundation texts, defines God's idea of the importance of each believer sharing the gift that is uniquely his or her own. Each one of us has received a Spiritual gifting or many gifts. These are to be **shared** from his or her life. Tradition has had the negative effect of discouraging the ordinary believer from being called to ministry, even though apostolic scripture consistently teaches this. Religious tradition suggests that ministry is only for those who are formerly ordained or credentialed.

Maturing as a disciple, is God's expectation for every believer. No church attender should remain a novice, a baby in the faith or an outside observer. Through the power of the Spirit we may attain "unto the stature of a 'mature man' even the stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4). The exaltation of only a single pastoral voice to turn parishioners into disciples is seriously 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 through the power of the Holy Spirit have the title, "elders." Church denominations today use the same term for individuals who are experienced in the doctrines of the denomination. Elders may differ from what religious might label as elders. Elders (or Deacons) should reflect experience of Holy Spirit and Biblical knowledge not equal to those with familiarity with denominal traditions such as Baptist or Catholic.

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 learn from. He noted what he had seen, touched, looked upon, and handled in the Word of life. *(1 John 1:1) 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 - -; This statement points to the hands on experience of Spiritual things which are provided by the Holy Spirit who takes that which Jesus provides and presents this to us. By this the Father is glorified.*

Koinonia is Fellowship, Participation and Sharing Among the Brethren

True fellowship is elusive and hard to achieve since religious traditions tends to separate

rather the body more than unite in belonging and feeling of one accord. The wrong motives and wrong understandings create disharmony. Correction is occasionally necessary but in the right Spirit. For we are to have the same Spirit that is Christ's and *- say the same thing - ", seeking that there be no schisms, walls, or disharmony among us. * (1Cor. 1:10,11) In an ideal Christian fellowship there is an openly expressed bond of love and fellowship and an honoring of the lives of our brethren. Love and acceptance unifies the body and religious titles only create divisions due to perceived status or supremacy.

Ministry Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

Discipling pertains to the edification and maturing of the body of Christ. This need not be a formal sort of ministry as religion class or catechism experienced on 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. In a gathering of believers there is give and take, dialogue and teaching or sharing from the word. There is the idea of the body edifying one another as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 and in 1 Peter 4. 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 4:10,11)

Any who are not spiritual renewed, or born again, will find koinonia more difficult (or uninteresting) because only those who have been quickened will have an affinity for spiritual food. 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 minister "edification" to each other. When these two or more gather, Jesus joins them and becomes a co-participant! This fellowship process is not complicated, nor is it formal, it is not domination of one individual 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 will, in time, accumulate various testimonies and experiences, some have more, some less. There may be some with musical gifts which enhance worship and

some with 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. See more about the body and its many parts that come together in God's kingdom ([romans 12, 1 Cor. 12](#))

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 may become so especially when everything is controlled by one leader. 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 and broken relationships and save peoples souls. The Holy Spirit administers just such actions. (See link to [Why We Gather](#)) Sometimes in an informal gathering we must wait in silence for the Lord to move and illuminate the way. This is because the cares of the world have burdened the minds of many and it takes a little time with our minds focused heavenward to feel the leading of God to inspire and to direct. Those who are new to Koinonia may have questions which can be used as a source of teaching and discussion.

The Encroachment of Formalism

A **Religious spirit** in the form of rulership, 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 some very good and worthwhile times of worship, 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.

A Paradigm to 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 a true worshiper and what is *worshipping 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 outward regalia of religious uniform over any common believer whose heart is open. 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, John 4:23 (*It is not about where you worship, not '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.

Disciples, Learning the "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](http://www.ptmin.org) and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to open, house church.

any that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace of God Disciples, Learning the "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 elevates men on pedestals which is usually desired by those in leadership. This should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-modeled teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons. *As many that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.” (1Peter 4:10-11)*

You may be interested in checking out the writing of Frank Viola and George Barna [See www.ptmin.org](http://www.ptmin.org) and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to an open, house church model.

Updated 1-14-2024