

A Disciple's Handbook

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ALL DISCIPLES MATURE FOR THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY

Ephesians 4: 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man." Note in verse 12; *There should be no comma after "equipping the saints."*

Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has made a way for us to follow him, even as the original disciples followed him. They walked at his side, spoke with him, and were witnesses and partakers of his spiritual ministry. They knew his voice; saw his miraculous power; and marveled at his wisdom. They knew him! Sadly, I fear that few nominal Christians are able to say they *really know* him. Yes, they have heard stories him, but do Christians know him? Perhaps the greatest thing revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only may know him, but can have fellowship with him.

He has invited us to partake in his nature, his mission and calling. We are called to do our part to reveal the rule and authority of God to the principalities and powers arrayed in the heavens. (The heavens above the earth is the domain of Lucifer and his Angels.) "For this reason the Son of God was manifested, that he should destroy the works of the Devil." (John 3:8) We worship what we know. (John c. 4) We who are believers know him. He called us to have fellowship with Him. We who are "his sheep" hear His voice; we can understand what he shows us in the Word. It is revealed from his place of dominion in the heaven above the heavens. As we gather as believers in a place of meeting can we say that we leave that meeting knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or were empowered by his touch?

Ministry Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

It would be good for unbelieving eyes to see what can and happen in a place of meeting where the Spirit is given free reign. In such times of fellowship God can make his glorious presence known; God's presence can lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing to minds and restore broken hearts. It can initiate repentance and save souls. Church liturgy, put together in a time far past, perhaps may have had good intentions but mostly falls short. It is God's manifested grace that builds the Kingdom.

Liturgical forms may have come about with hope to preserve some of the glory of earlier days. Perhaps to insure the manifestation of God's presence as it was once experienced. After a while God's wellspring began to cease its flow. But the Spirit can not be bottled and preserved! He, The Spirit of Christ, is alive and powerful. He acts in the NOW, never in the Then.

The Bible shows reveals that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of Old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departs that which remains becomes a lifeless idol. The temple remained the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained but the manifestation of its power 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 and religion classes remained but the glory of his presence had departed. The rituals and the liturgical trappings remained but the presence of God vanished. Ritual is born, In my opinion, when men try to duplicate an action which once brought forth the glory of God through faith. That which remained was vainly held only to become a substitution for God's presence.

With the passing of time after the apostolic age, "Ministry" became the focus of a very small body of liturgical experts, called the priesthood or the clergy when it was always meant 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 worshiper. What is this *true worshiper* and what is meant by *worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth*? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. God looks at the heart. He does not regard the man wearing religious garb above a common person whose heart is open. *Worship in the Spirit* can be experienced only by those who are *born of the Spirit*.

God does not favor a cathedral over a location which has been made ready on the inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, it is not where you worship, neither this mountain or another mountain but who we worship. He said to her that some do not know what they are even worshiping but the truth is that salvation is connected to worship, it has been built upon the foundation of the chosen Jewish traditions. The law and the prophets foretold the chief cornerstone, the Jewish Messiah. The time was coming and now is, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Most High God in Spirit and in

Truth. Those who do not have this Spirit can not have the True revelation of God of which Jesus spoke.

The Truth is expressed in Revelation Chapter 19:10, *“Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*

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