

From
DISCIPLE
To
APOSTLE



SEVEN PILLARS CHURCH
2ND MEXICO SUMMIT - MEXICO CITY - APRIL 2025

By Paul M Hanssen

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

INTRODUCTION:

The word “disciple” appears 273 times in the Bible: once in the Old Testament and 272 in the New Testament. This should pique our interest in understanding the significance of disciples and discipleship in our personal lives and spiritual growth.

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly...(Acts 6:7)

The evidence of the increase in the revelation and spreading of God's Word is the "multiplying of disciples." Take note: It does not say the multiplying of people or believers but of disciples!

Many churches are filled with people, but few are filled with disciples. *A disciple is a learner, a follower of examples, a pupil, and someone who listens to and practices what they hear. The mission of a disciple is to be taught, trained, skilled, disciplined, and structured into vessels that can be used by God in whatever capacity His purpose has determined since eternity past.*

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them... (Matthew 5:1-2)

I have said it many times, and I'm saying it again: I'm not looking for people; I'm looking for disciples- those who can be taught and will follow the purpose and destiny of what they learn and are called to accomplish. One of the reasons for ongoing and long-lasting spiritual immaturity in the church is the lack of discipleship. Just because you are a student does not mean you are a disciple. Just because you sit in church and hear sermons does not make you a disciple. Rather, a disciple seeks to know and understand how to live out their faith, purpose, and vision. Therefore, they follow the example of those who teach and train them. They are not afraid of correction, rebuke, and guidance; as a matter of fact, they welcome it.

Discipleship is the foundation of sonship. We say that we desire to become the sons of God, and yet we refuse to be guided, trained, and directed. You will never become a manifested son of God without being “discipled.” The words *disciple* and *discipline* are connected in the sense that they both speak of those who are being trained to follow guidance, structure, and purpose and to live in submission to what is taught. This describes the making of the sons of God.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye are chastised, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. (Hebrews 12:6-8)

Discipleship is the path to sonship, and true sons do not refuse or deny chastening (training, education, learning, instruction, and punishment) and scourging (causing trouble and suffering as a learning tool).

The Philadelphia and Laodicea churches speak to us of the bride of Christ and the manifested sons of God who inherit the throne of God. To Laodicea, the Lord said:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

We live in a generation of “church people” who shy away from discipline. Believers, in general, tend to resist guidance and instruction. A spirit of independence, self-governance, and self-love marks this generation.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

The question must be asked: “Are you simply a 'believer,' or are you a teachable disciple?”

LESSON ONE: PRIEST, PROPHET, & KING

The High Calling of God encompasses various aspects and dimensions of spiritual experience. However, the ultimate goal of the high calling is *Christlikeness*, to become like Him, sons of the Highest—hence, the calling is referred to as a *high* calling. It is a call made by the Highest to the highest place of all—the likeness of the Son of the Highest. The high calling is an invitation to abide with the Father/King in His Kingdom and the throne of the Kingdom. Without bearing the fruit of the image and likeness of the Son of the Highest, we

cannot obtain the highest predestined purpose of God, *the likeness of His Son*. To be conformed to His likeness, we must also follow His example and be trained as disciples.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

There is no greater or higher predestined purpose than becoming conformed (fashioned, shaped, and resembled) to the *image and likeness of the Son of God*, the Father's first fruit and firstborn. The sons of God will also be the *first fruits* unto God and the Lamb among created and redeemed humankind. (*Revelation 14:4*)

The greatest pursuit of your life should be to conform to the image of Jesus. This involves producing the fruit of His likeness. It means being reshaped, refashioned, and transformed into God's original purpose—His image and likeness. There is no higher calling than this! To fulfill this high calling, God sent His Son to be the example, teacher, and the path through which we achieve the highest of God's predestined purpose.

Pursuing His likeness cannot be achieved without knowing Him. I refer not to academic knowledge, but to relational knowledge- knowledge gained through experience by walking with Him, the Master Teacher.

Jesus is a *priest, prophet, and king*. The priest ministry is found in the courtyard, the prophet ministry is in the holy place, and the kingly ministry resides in the holiest of all. There, in the holiest of all, *the priest and prophet become a king*—a priestly, prophetically inspired King. The sons of the highest, the sons of God, are the chosen generation who have become royal priests, priests of the highest order, or *high priests like the high priest*.



THE HOLIEST OF ALL - **KING**
COMBINED KING, PROPHET, & HIGH PRIEST



THE HOLY PLACE - **PROPHET**



THE COURTYARD - **PRIEST**

Apart from Jesus Himself, who is the eternal priest, prophet, and King, Samuel is also an example of the same. Samuel was first a priest (from childhood), then a prophet (an inspired one), and a judge (ruler and governor) over Israel.

- 1 Samuel 2:18 Samuel was a **priest** (from childhood)
- 1 Samuel 3:20 Samuel was a **prophet**
- 1 Samuel 7:6 Samuel was a **judge-ruler**

Many things could be said about Samuel. The Jewish people regard him as one of the greatest prophets in their history. His life reflects the growth and maturation of the sons of God. Beginning with the mantle of a priest from his childhood, he grew in the LORD and in what God had purposed for him to accomplish.

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. (1 Samuel 3:19)

Samuel's life is a powerful prophetic demonstration and reflection of the Son of God. Eli, the High Priest, referred to Samuel as "my son" on more than one occasion (1 Samuel 3:6, 16). Samuel matured in his role as priest, prophet, and king (judge) by becoming a disciple in the house of the LORD. He submitted to direction and discipline and learned to hear from God under Eli's mentoring.

That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. (1 Samuel 3:4-10)

Samuel, while clothed in an ephod and ministering before the LORD, did not yet know the LORD to such a degree as to know and comprehend His voice. Instead of jumping to conclusions, self-interpretations, or carnal assumptions, he ran to his teacher and authority (as a true disciple does) and submitted his experience to the experience of the one who over him.

Too many precious and called people never submit their experiences before those God has positioned over them. We live in a generation where most people are arrogant and filled with pride and self-determination that they would never consider presenting what they hear (or

what they think they hear) to godly authority and leadership. This is not a disciple but rather a bastard. (Hebrews 12:8, Deuteronomy 23:2)

Even though Eli lost his way during his lengthy 40-year tenure as high priest, he still possessed the sense, humility, and wisdom to guide Samuel on how to respond to God's voice. Without Eli's mentoring and direction, Samuel would have been lost during this developmental phase. Many well-intentioned people are misguided while believing they are aware, knowledgeable, and on the right path. Few possess the humility to submit what they hear, see, or experience to the authority that God has placed over them. Samuel, understanding Eli's condition in his youth, nonetheless submitted himself, knowing that Eli had an experience with God that he had yet to acquire.

From this discipleship position, Samuel's mantle evolved from that of a priest to that of a prophet and a judge (king) in Israel. All advancement in spiritual growth and service unto the Lord begins with becoming a disciple.

What is the true essence of a disciple?

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)

- A disciple is a one who pursues the Master's example (come after me means to grow and get behind in pursuit)
- A disciples learns to deny him/herself and their own ambitions and agenda in favor of the teacher's
- A disciple does not frown at or cast away the cross of separation and shame
- A disciple follows (to be on the same road and follow and accompany)

King David is another example of a priest, prophet, and king.

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

LESSON TWO - THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAN-CHILD KING – Cast Out Athaliah

There is a demonic power on the loose today, working overtime to kill and destroy the vision, birth, and ruling power of the Man-Child-King. In particular, the Jezebel spirit targets that which brings forth the man-child, preserves the man-child, and positions the man-child in his rightful place before God on the throne of Kingdom authority.

Jehu took Jezebel down, but Jezebel had a daughter named Athaliah (her name means "Jah has constrained" – yet she never lived up to her name, just as her mother didn't live up to her name – Jezebel, meaning "pure").

Athaliah married Jehoram (also known as Joram), the king of Judah. They had a son named Ahaziah – who became the King of Judah after Jehoram's death.

He and the King of Israel were wicked, and Jehu destroyed both of them.

However, Athaliah, upon the death of her son, King Joram, became the first and last queen to reign in Judah. She was just like her mother, Jezebel. She carried the same spirit as Jezebel, she used the same fear tactics, the same manipulation, the same control, and she was just as wicked.

Athaliah slew all the Davidic seed likely to claim the throne after the death of her son, Joram. The Jezebel/Athaliah spirit always pursues the destruction of the priest, prophet, and kingly anointings. What are these anointings in your life?

- PRIEST = Praying, warring, worshippers – in the courtyard.
- PROPHET = The inspired breath – being filled with the life, breath, fire, light, bread, and the inspiration of God – (the same breath that God breathed into man in the beginning – in the Holy place).
- KING = Dominion authority – Bride & Sonship, the throne – in the Holiest of All.

Jezebel destroyed the priests and the prophets – whereas Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter, came behind her to destroy the royal seed of David, the kings.

And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal. (2 Kings 11:1)

The Jezebel/Athaliah spirit, through various channels and methods, works to destroy the royal inheritance, the royal kings, and priests unto God, the Melchizedek's, the manifested sons of God. Jezebel/Athaliah believed she had fulfilled her mission. She believed she had seized the throne of Judah, David's throne, the throne of Zion, and the throne in Jerusalem for herself. She believed she had secured the Kingdom under her domain and authority. But she was mistaken.

Many of you reading this or hearing the sound of my voice teaching this lesson are under the influence of the rebellious, manipulative, and controlling spirits of Jezebel and Athaliah. You may believe you have secured a "throne position and power," whereas, in reality, that spirit is destroying the very thing your heart truly seeks.

But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land. (2 Kings 11:2-3)

Jehosheba (meaning Yahweh has sworn), the sister of King Ahaziah, took one-year-old Jehoash (Joash) (meaning fire of Yahweh) and hid him in the temple of God for six years. The oath of God (Jehosheba), that which God has sworn, preserved the man-child, the one to come forth with the breath of inspiration and fire of God.

It is commonly known that during the six years of “hiding” in the house of the LORD, Joash was in training. He was disciplined and disciplined in preparation for his role as king of Judah. He remained unknown, living in obscurity, and was not visible on the performance stage but was kept in the bedchamber (meaning the inner room) in the house of God. Here, Jehosheba preserved him along with his nurse. The nurse symbolizes feeding, teaching, training, and guiding.

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. (2 Chronicles 24:1-2).

At age seven, Joash, the FIRE OF GOD, stepped forward. Seven signifies completion and an oath fulfilled—when the time was complete, and it was now the season for God's purpose to be revealed, a time when God would raise the seed of David to the throne of David—the man-child, the fiery inspiration of God, emerged from the temple and was placed on the throne of David. God fulfilled His oath. Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of his mentor and instructor, the priest Jehoiada. As long as he followed his example, he was able to fulfill his calling.

Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD: (2 Chronicles 23:12)

Jehoash (also known as Joash) was anointed king – he took the throne. Athaliah came running to the temple to disrupt the process and work her manipulative, evil ways to prevent God's order of dominion and authority from arising in the land.

Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there. (2 Chronicles 23:14-15).

Jehoiada, the priest, was Jehosheba's husband. He played a crucial role in raising Joash to become king. The foundation of sonship is the priestly ministry, nurtured by the priesthood mantle through worship, prayer, and sacrifice. He, the priest, oversaw the warriors and commanded them to "bring her forth." This essentially means to drag her out of the temple, bring her out, break her out, and send her out with a command – demonstrating the act of casting her out of the temple and cleaning house, or sweeping the house clean!

Athaliah was slain by the Horse Gate. This gate was used by armies on horseback as they rode into battle. They departed from and re-entered through the Horse Gate. Located near the king's house, it was close to the throne room. Overcoming this spirit demands both worship and warfare. You see, you cannot and will not fall into the grip of the Jezebel spirit if you are worshipping and praying. It's impossible to walk in sin and corruption while simultaneously worshipping His Holiness. This is overcome by cleaning the house.

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

LESSON THREE: Disciples and Apostles (Called and Chosen)

The first use of the word disciple is in the Old Testament.

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. (Isaiah 8:16)

The Hebrew word for disciple is *lim-mood*, derived from *law-mad*, meaning to be taught, trained, and skillful. It also means to be instructed, learned, and to become an expert.

The common idea about being a disciple and making disciples is a shallow and misconceived presentation of something far deeper, greater, and more meaningful.

Jesus had a multitude of "general" disciples.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? (John 6:60)

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? (John 6:66-67)

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. (Luke 7:11)

A general disciple was considered a follower of Christ or a Christian believer. However, general disciples were more than just believers. They were pupils, students, and learners of Christ's ways and teachings. The disciples who went back and walked away from Him walked away from following His teaching. Many believe but do not follow.

However, the called twelve were set apart to go beyond, transcend, and rise into a higher calling, election, and purpose. Jesus called all twelve of His disciples who were set apart unto an election of higher purpose.

- **Peter and Andrew:** *And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)*
- **James and John:** *And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:21-22)*
- **Matthew:** *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)*
- **Philip:** *The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. (John 1:43)*

The disciples were first called because, upon their lives, there was an election. Many are called, but few are chosen or elected unto a higher purpose. (Matthew 22:14)

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (John 6:70)

At some point, a *called disciple* becomes a *chosen apostle* (not to be confused with the Apostolic mantle and ministry of a “sent one.”) God cannot send you to fulfill His purpose without you first becoming a true disciple.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles. (Luke 6:13)

It begins with a calling but transcends to being elected or being chosen.

Many are called to redemption, service, and various ministries. But few are chosen to go beyond unto the highest. Not many are like Noah, David, Gideon, Elijah, and Jesus Himself, just to mention a few. Throughout history, the chosen have stood alone, walked with the

minority, been rejected by the crowds, despised by the arrogant, and hated by the strong. However, they have also been instruments God uses to demonstrate His glory, power, and presence.

The twelve disciples, later named apostles, were numbered with the chosen few.

Jesus called many disciples unto Himself. However, from the many He called, He only chose twelve to become *His apostles*. The twelve disciples were just like the other disciples whom He had called. However, the twelve were not only called but chosen for a task and purpose that went beyond the average calling of a disciple.

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. (Acts 1:2)

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (John 6:70)

Consider these powerful words: *“I have chosen you twelve.” Once your spiritual ears hear these “words of election,” you can never be the same again.* His choice for you is His purpose for you. His choice is not based upon your abilities, greatness, goodness, or talents. His choice is not centered around your personality or strengths. His choice for you is not centered around your family tree or acquaintances. His choice for you is not influenced by a deed or a work of charity you have performed. If that had been the case, Jesus would never have chosen the twelve. Thomas was a doubter, Peter was a coward, and Matthew was a tax collector. (Tax collectors were known thieves.) Apart from John, all the chosen disciples deserted Jesus on the eve of His crucifixion. Yet despite their apparent weaknesses and shortcomings, the Master chose the twelve, each one for a specific purpose (including Judas, chosen for a particular purpose in fulfilling God’s plan).

The sons of God, the kingly priests, are a chosen generation made up of those who seek after the LORD.

This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah. (Psalm 24:6)

Are you a “God seeker?” Is your pursuit to become like Him, a son of the highest? If so, take your calling seriously and learn to sit at the Master’s feet and learn of Him.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

LESSON FOUR: Who is an Apostle?

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; (Hebrews 3:1)

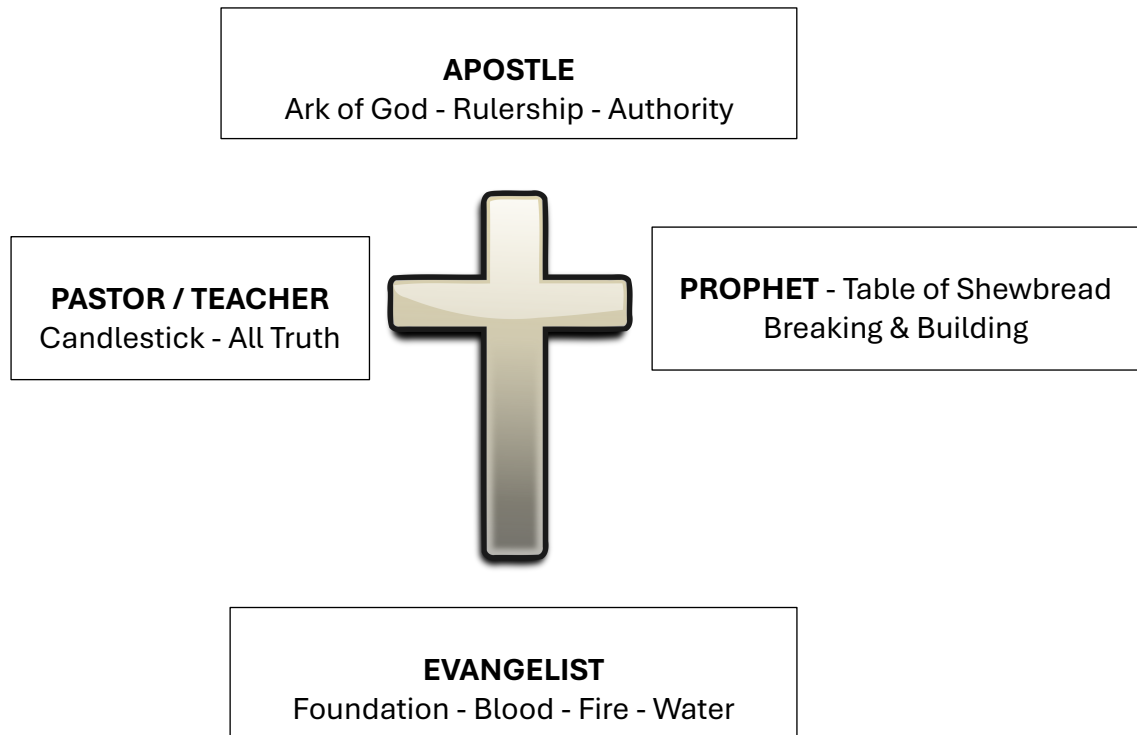
Here, Paul beckons the partakers (the participants and sharers) of the heavenly calling to consider (to fully observe, behold, discover, perceive, and heed) Christ Jesus, the APOSTLE and HIGH PRIEST of our profession (confession, assent, covenant, and togetherness). Not only is the Son of the Highest a High Priest, but He is also an Apostle. Since He is an Apostle, we must strive to become apostles to pursue His likeness. What is an apostle regarding our personal pursuit of Christ's likeness?

An apostle is a delegate (to represent), an ambassador of the Gospel, a commissioner of Christ (with miraculous powers), a messenger, and one who is sent. Apostles are chosen as representatives of the Gospel of the Kingdom- they carry authority from the throne room of the King and are sent to establish the throne and Kingdom among men

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 9Ephesians 4:11-13)

God gave the five-fold ministry to the church to equip the people of God to fulfill all of God's works and come to the completeness of His likeness or to grow to the fullness of His stature.

See diagram on the following page



The five-fold ministries are a gift to the New Testament Church. God has called and ordained certain ones to carry specific anointings, authority, gifts, and abilities to accomplish His purpose of perfecting (or equipping) the saints to fulfill the works of God. When we consider “the works of God,” most of us think about ministry of some sort. Even though the works of God can include ministry, it is not the works of public ministry that primarily build the body of Christ.

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6:29)

The greatest work of God is believing, trusting, and having faith in the Son of God. The “work of God” performed in your life is tested when the Lord requires us to fulfill His purpose and desire, particularly in adverse circumstances. We can say we believe in Him all we want, but when he commands, requires, demands, and directs in a certain way that we do not like, do we then “do the works of God” and believe in Him? When the storms rage and things are not going as we had hoped or as we desire, do we then do “the works of God?”

An Apostle is a “sent one.” We often have a specific image in our minds of what this entails. Most of the time, we think that being sent implies crossing oceans or traveling to other places to preach, teach, and minister in various ways. However, that relates to the actual ministry

of an apostle. Being sent carries a much deeper significance than that in relation to our personal lives. It has to do with fulfilling the works of God!

*And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. **I must work the works of him that sent me**, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, **Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.)** He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. (John 9:1-7)*

Here, we have a perfect example of being “sent.” Jesus sent the blind man to the pool of Siloam. Siloam means “to be sent,” derived from the Greek word apostello, the root of apostolos, or apostle. The blind man was sent to fulfill the “work of God,” which was to believe in Him who issued the command to go and wash!

The reason we do not obey is because we do not believe. We do not believe because we have not been trained as a disciple following the Master’s example and pursuing His likeness.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. (John 9:4)

No example exists in the scriptures of an apostle who was not something else prior to becoming one.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; (Luke 6:13)

All the apostles were initially disciples of Christ before becoming apostles. The disciples were called, but the apostles were selected or chosen from among them. *Many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14)*. Even Paul, the greatest apostle of all, disappeared into Arabia for three years after his conversion. It was here that He was taught by Jesus Himself through revelation (see Galatians 1:11-12,17-18). In other words, Paul was *discipled* before becoming cloaked with the apostolic authority.

The word "disciple" appears 273 times in the Bible, which is significant because it indicates the ***importance of discipleship*** in the lives of Christ’s followers.

- Disciple is translated from the **Greek** word *math-ey-tes'* and *means a learner, a pupil, to grow in understanding*.
- In **Hebrew**, disciple is derived from *lim-mood'*, which means *instructed and taught*. It comes from the root word *law-mad'* which means to goad (provoke someone) with

the rod with an incentive to stimulate some action or reaction), to be diligent, become an expert, instructed, and skillful.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)

Discipleship is a neglected and misunderstood concept in the church today. When the topic is addressed, it is often superficial and misinterpreted. Discipleship is integral to bearing the fruit of harvest that God expects from those who follow Him.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20 KJV)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV)

Jesus' final words to His disciples/apostles before He ascended into heaven, dubbed *the great commission*, carry tremendous weight and importance for anyone who is seeking to reach, fulfill, and accomplish the purpose of God's high calling. Many have ignored, circumvented, despised, and even scorned these words, labeling them insignificant for those who believe in "a high calling." Humanity always finds a way to bypass anything that may cause us to be uncomfortable in our skin. *We find convenient ways to ignore portions of God's Word that push us into action of any kind.* This is due to our pride, slothfulness, and slumbering spirits. The call to awaken must also awaken a hunger within us to fulfill "all" the Master has commissioned us to accomplish and fulfill.

Making disciples is part of God's purpose for those He has called. However, to make disciples, one must first be a disciple. Disciples are formed by immersing followers in the entirety of the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in other words immersing them in all truth. I realize that Jesus' command may primarily refer to water baptism, at least that is the normal interpretation of the great commission. However, I believe there is a deeper significance to His command. If baptizing people in water makes disciples what about redemption by blood? Where does that fit in?

- To **baptize** means to immerse completely. It means to be actively and profoundly involved in something; it involves being submerged and covered. Was Jesus instructing His disciples to go and submerge those He had called in the entire truth

and all aspects of His divine nature and Godhead? This is food for thought! These days, the entirety of the Godhead is not taught in many churches. People pick and choose to focus on one or another aspect of the Godhead while ignoring all others.

Water baptism isn't the only way the term "baptism" is used in the New Testament

- Water baptism - Acts 8:36-38
- Baptism of the Holy Ghost - Mark 1:8 - Acts 1:5
- Baptism of suffering - Matthew 20:22

Should we not consider that Jesus was commissioning His disciples/apostles to go and make disciples not through water baptism but through the baptism/immersion in the complete nature, power, character, and authority of the Godhead; in other words, "go baptize them in all truth that you have learned of me?"

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

We need to understand discipleship to be able to both **be a disciple and to make disciples**. You are called to make disciples - to teach others, to lead by example, and to show the way. This is not a calling for a select few called to the ministry, but it is for all of us. True disciples will become apostles (not in the sense of the apostolic mantle or ministry, but in the sense of carrying and fulfilling the likeness of Jesus). He is an apostle, we too must become like Him, apostles!

Who is a disciple, and how can we become true disciples?

Take my yoke upon you, and learn (same word as disciple) of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:29-30)

Learn of me - be *discipled* of me!

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

LESSON FIVE: WORTHY TO BE A DISCIPLE

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

To some, Jesus's words may seem harsh. However, viewing them in the context of what Jesus was teaching gives us deeper insight into what it means to be a true disciple.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-27).

There is more to discipleship than learning. Many people preach discipleship and go so far as to call themselves disciples. However, a closer look at what it means to be a disciple proves that many are anything but disciples.

Jesus lays out the cost of discipleship:

- Come to Him (to submit to as the Master)
- Hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters (meaning to love less)
- Hate his own life (love his/her own life less than Him)
- Bear his cross
- Come after Him (meaning to follow His example and pursue His likeness)

“Cannot be my disciple” means that it is impossible to be a pupil and learner without following the criteria set by the Lord. Many want and even profess to be disciples; however, they love their own lives more than they love following the Master’s commands. They profess to be disciples but refuse to take up the cross associated with walking in His footsteps. Their lives are more precious to themselves than pursuing His likeness. Disciples give it all up; they surrender and bow under the yoke of the Master.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

FROM DISCIPLE TO APOSTLE

LESSON SIX: Follow Him - Is God Not Enough?

Being a disciple is not what most people imagine or have been taught. For reference, let's take another look at the meaning of the word disciple.

Disciple is translated from the **Greek** word *math-ey-tes*' and *means a learner, a pupil, to grow in understanding.*

- In **Hebrew**, "disciple" is derived from "lim-mood," which means instructed and taught. It comes from the root word "law-mad," which means to goad (provoke someone) with a rod, with an incentive to stimulate action or reaction, to be diligent, and to become an expert, instructed, and skillful

A disciple is a student, a learner, and a follower. The goal of those who make disciples is to see excellence and skill developed in the lives of the learners. A true disciple-maker will work diligently to ensure that the disciple becomes more skilled than himself or herself. A teacher's goal is to produce disciples who are as skillful as themselves and even excel above and beyond to become proficient in the subject they are being taught.

In biblical times, it was common for rabbis and other religious teachers and leaders to have disciples. Disciples would listen, learn, watch, and follow their teachers' examples, becoming skilled in what they were taught. Therefore, it was neither strange nor out of the ordinary for Jesus to have His own disciples. Jesus continuously taught His disciples to follow His example and to do as He had done.

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. (John 13:15)

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (1 Peter 2:21)

When Jesus called His disciples, He did so with two words: FOLLOW ME

- And he saith unto them, **Follow me**, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)
- But Jesus said unto him, **Follow me**; and let the dead bury their dead. (Matthew 8:22)

- And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, **Follow me**. And he arose, and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)
- The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, **Follow me**. (John 1:43)

Two words stand out in the Master's call for disciples: Follow me. To follow means to be together in the same way, to accompany as a disciple. It connotes fashioning oneself after the likeness of the one followed. Becoming like the master tops the agenda of a follower. Therefore, to pursue Christlikeness is the goal of a disciple of Christ.

A disciple's goal is not ministry, even though ministry may be part of becoming a disciple. Rather, discipleship is pursuing the likeness of the Master. Becoming like the Son of God is the high pursuit of a disciple. Adopting the character, nature, and integrity of Jesus is true discipleship. As such, we are also called to make disciples.

As a leader, my goal is to make disciples. The apostle Paul said:

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

In other words, Paul pursued Christlikeness that he could portray to his followers as they followed him. Leaders have a tremendous responsibility to showcase Christ's character to their disciples. However, no human on earth is just like Christ. I have always been amazed at how quickly "followers" point out one's failures but never encourage or appreciate one's strengths. That's the nature of fallen man in action. This type of pushback should not discourage anyone from making disciples, something we are all called to do. However, it cannot be overstated that making disciples can never be effective unless one is first a disciple and in hot pursuit of the likeness of the teacher.

*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye **followers of me**. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. (1 Corinthians 4:16-17)*

*Brethren, be **followers together of me**, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (Philippians 3:17)*

*Those things, which ye have both **learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me**, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:9)*

*And ye became **followers of us**, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7)*

Becoming a “*maker of disciples*” and an apostle who follows in the footsteps of Jesus toward Christlikeness starts with becoming a disciple. Over the years, I have noticed how fearful people can be of emulating an example. Most individuals desire to be “original,” not realizing that their identity and the choices they make are influenced by others, which makes them followers of someone, often without their awareness. Being conformed to the likeness of Christ means distancing oneself from the idea of “originality.” Only God is original—He created humanity to embody His image and likeness, fulfilling His purpose and will. This isn’t originality! Instead, it signifies the discovery and realization of God’s original purpose for humankind—the image and likeness of God.

However, consciously choosing to follow as a disciple means submitting to someone else’s authority, which in turn makes one accountable. Trust me when I say that few choose to come under another’s authority and be subject to oversight. Nevertheless, this is what it truly means to be a disciple.

Being a disciple means *following, learning from, and conforming to an example*. To make this a living experience, we should examine what Jesus taught about discipleship. Many of the verses we will explore are often cited at different times to illustrate various principles of truth. However, when we view Jesus through the lens of discipleship, a different perspective emerges that is frequently overlooked.

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (Matthew 10:24-25)

One of the most important matters to understand about a disciple is this: “It is enough for the disciple to be like his master.” In the current church environment, few possess the vision and goal of being like the master; few have a passion for Christlikeness, and few pursue being conformed to the image of Jesus. However, it is enough—meaning this is what is required; this is what God desires.

It is a common misconception that the disciples became apostles after Jesus ascended into heaven. This is not true.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; (Luke 6:13)

While the rabbi, the Master Teacher, was among them, teaching and training them, they followed Him as He ministered and revealed the Kingdom of God. Jesus called them apostles—sent ones.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; (Matthew 10:2)

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. (Matthew 10:5-11)

The twelve were disciples, followers of the Master teacher and rabbi. However, when He sent them, He sent them as apostles—ambassadors.

The verses quoted above present many important considerations. Pastors, Bible teachers, and commentators have sought to understand what Jesus' words signify for modern-day disciples and apostles of the Lamb. However, the key takeaway from His words and command is that a disciple should not be burdened by plans, programs, and the cares of ministerial tasks. Instead, they should be like a free-flowing river that trusts God for direction, guidance, provision, and power.

You will never be an apostle of the Lamb, a sent one, a *son-of-God-disciple*, as long as you remain nailed down, boxed in, and unable to move and flow without dependencies.

One of the reasons the modern church is in spiritual decline, lukewarmness, and death is:

- Worship and prayer leaders have depended on props to create an atmosphere.
- Pastors and teachers lean on all manner of extra-Biblical sources and resources to build their sermons and teaching.
- The church is governed by programs (nothing wrong with programs when God is in it, but not when the program becomes the thrust and force of the success aimed for).
- Church services are dependent upon and revolve around the clock, time frames, and set schedules.
- People's lives are frequently weighted down by religious forms and customs, making it impossible for them flow in the Spirit.

The sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14).

There is nothing wrong with any of the things mentioned above, but when these aspects begin to weigh you down and dictate how God's House is governed and how His church operates, then we have a problem. Jesus taught His disciples and apostles not to be burdened with unnecessary weight that would hinder their journey and mission. God's people have crossed the boundaries of the Word and Spirit to create a religious system that is constrained and lifeless.

2 Kings 1:1-16

Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, embodying their two spirits of stubborn rebellion against God. Ahab and Jezebel lived in Jezreel, situated in the Valley of Megiddo. Interestingly, this is where the final battle of Armageddon will occur, on the very ground that Ahab and Jezebel occupied and controlled. The final battle of Armageddon also serves as a prophetic representation of the ultimate confrontation and struggle faced by the set-apart remnant of God. This battle, primarily against the destructive spirits of Ahab and Jezebel in our own personal lives and, secondarily, within the church, will be intense. As people of the end times, we, too, confront the final battle in the Spirit. The Ahab and Jezebel/Athaliah spirits and the fruit produced by these spirits will be part of the final battle that the called and chosen people of God will face in the end.

A lukewarm, lethargic, and apathetic church will not overcome the fruit of these spirits. Victory will be achieved by the followers of the Lamb—those who arise, who proclaim (sing and worship through inspiration) the truth, and who have been empowered for the fight by responding to the call to be set apart in intimate closeness and harmony with God and His eternal purpose.

What does the fruit of these spirits look like? We will be shocked to learn how much of this fruit is evident in our lives and churches.

Ahab and Jezebel were the rulers of Israel. Ahab was a weak leader who never stood for God and His laws. He permitted and encouraged idolatry in the land. His weakness allowed Jezebel to exert control and govern over the kingdom that belonged to God. He was unwilling to take risks (or step out of his comfort zone) and advocate for the laws of God, no matter the cost.

Jezebel was a cunning manipulator. She had an agenda and always pushed her agenda with total disregard for God or His laws. She was a false prophetess inspired by demonic powers; she was sensual and misleading.

Ahaziah was the fruit of this wicked union.

Vs. 2. Ahaziah sent messengers to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron.

- EKRON - to eradicate (destroy completely and put an end to), to pluck up, exterminate, root up
- BAAL-ZEBUB - The lord, master, husband, and chief that stings like swift flying fly

Ekron and Beelzebub represent a dependency on a false lord, master, and chief whose mission is to sting with the sting of death and eradicate the governance of God's Spirit and Word in the land.

It was to this that Ahaziah, the king over God's people, sent messengers to inquire about his sickness.

Vs. 3. But God spoke to the inspired prophet - Elijah; go and meet the messengers and ask a very potent question - IS IT BECAUSE THERE IS NO GOD IN ISRAEL that you go and enquire of the one who wants to eradicate the power, glory, and presence of God?

Elijah's question needs to be asked in the lives of God's people today. Is God and His Spirit and Word not enough? Do you need to go outside the perimeters of His divine presence to seek life? Why is He never enough? I will tell you why. It is because seeking Him and trusting Him for your life, service, and well-being is not always easy. It's hard work—dedication, commitment, and surrender before Him.

Vs. 16. Elijah finally appeared in person before King Ahaziah. He gave the same message, yet again, that he had been attempting to send him. IS THERE NO GOD IN ISRAEL - Why are you inquiring outside of the presence and word of God for answers to your condition? He added, "You are not coming off this bed; you will die."

This reminds me of the same fate of those who fellowship the mother spirit of Ahaziah, Jezebel.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:21-23)

God is looking for disciples, pupils who will denounce the wicked spirits working overtime to take down the structure and strength of the church in the end times. We should all search our hearts and repent and seek to sit at the feet of the Master and learn!