

The Journey of the Disciple | The Discipleship Spiral, Part 1

I. Discipleship 101

- According to Merriam-Webster a disciple is “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.”
- The above definition does a good job helping us see the full scope of discipleship. But the definition of the Greek word most often translated “disciple” in the Scriptures is even more specific.
- The word *mathetes* is used of a learner. It comes from another Greek word that refers simply to learning. This root words speaks of thought accompanied by endeavor.
- And whether we’re learning in school or learning by experience, students have a teacher.
- Now, though the word “disciple” has a strictly religious connotation in our modern ears, the word was historically nearly indistinguishable from the words “students,” “pupils,” and “learners.”
- That is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. A disciple of Christ is a follower of God’s truth.
- Though our standing in Christ will not be graded on our performance as a disciple, there are four vital truths we have to recognize.
 - Our salvation is tied to the work of Christ, not our own.
 - But if we truly are saved, we are going to work, grow, and be conformed to the image of Christ. No one who isn’t learning and growing is a Christian.
 - Not all disciples of Christ will grow at the same speed and reach the same level of maturity on this earth. But . . .
 - We will receive a final “grading” of our earthly work. God is going to test how well we learned and grew when we stand before Him at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

II. The Reality of Learning

- **God created you to learn about and become more like Him.**
 - If you were incapable of learning, you would all be unable to move. But you had to learn to roll over, crawl, stand, walk, and run.
 - If you were incapable of learning, you wouldn’t be able to communicate.
 - Regardless of the languages you use, you learned to make sounds and then link those sounds together to form words and link those words together to form ideas. And — as you’ve grown — your communication should have matured with you.
 - Lastly, if you were incapable of learning, you wouldn’t even know how to eat. Yes, children are born with some very basic instincts concerning the necessity of food and how to eat it, but they still need to be helped to learn to do it correctly and efficiently.
 - Think about it this way — if God had not created you to learn . . . you would have died days after birth.
 - Babies don’t complain that learning to walk is too hard. They’re generally excited to learn this very new and challenging skill, and regardless of how many tumbles they take, babies continue to practice undaunted. And the cool thing is that most children aren’t technically “taught” to stand or walk or run. They learn it naturally.
 - So, generally speaking, it’s not that the truth to be learned is genuinely too difficult for us to learn, we’ve just gown into an overdeveloped sense of pride, arrogance, and laziness. Pride keeps you from wanting to learn. Arrogance convinces you that you already know what you need to know. And laziness makes you certain that doing something less strenuous and more “fun” would be better.

- **God commands you to learn about and become more like Him.**
 - Proverbs 1:5, 17, 9:9, II Timothy 3:14
 - God *expects* you to learn. He expects you and your fellow disciples to learn about Him and submit to what you have learned.
 - And this makes perfect sense. God created you to learn, why wouldn't He expect you to do what He created you to do?
- **God capacitates you to learn about and become more like Him.**
 - Proverbs 2:6, 8:17
 - "Capacitate" means to make something capable. Whereas you weren't able to do it on your own, God gives you everything you need to learn and apply what He's teaching you.
 - Remember that learning is simply the acquisition of knowledge. This verse tells us that knowledge and understanding both come from God. That means that you need Him in order to learn anything. This is true in two senses.
 - By God's common grace He's created all of us to learn and provides us the skills necessary to learn what we must learn.
 - More specifically, as children of God we know that the Holy Spirit helps us to learn unique things and learn them in a unique way. Unbelievers don't have access to that level of understanding. Do you believe that?
 - Do you honestly believe that God will give you the strength and power necessary to learn whatever He tasks to learn?
 - Do you also believe that God wants you to be an eternal student? Do you believe that He wants you to learn about Him from His Word? Do you believe that He wants your pastors and disciplers and friends and family to teach you about life and godliness from the Bible?
 - Most of our attitudes concerning learning would drastically change if we simply acknowledged that God would never ask us to do anything that He has will not also equip us to do.
 - Of course, on the flip side of that point, we must not naively assume that God will *cause* us to learn everything we need to learn without our expected effort.