

How Jesus Trained the Twelve

Carl W. Wilson has calculated that “there are a total of ninety chapters in the Gospels and Acts 1 about Jesus Christ’s appearance and ministry in the world.” Five chapters have to do with the coming of Christ into the world, while the last thirty-three chapters focus on Jesus’ death and resurrection. The fifty-two chapters between the first five and the final thirty-three describe how Jesus trained the Twelve and prepared them to reach the world with the message that we can have life in His name by grace through faith.

These fifty-two chapters give us the plan of Jesus for the redemption of the world. Many have studied the Gospel records and have been students of Jesus without seeing His astounding plan and the methods by which the lives of the Twelve were transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the nations. Those whose eyes have been opened to see how He trained His disciples, whose minds have been enlightened to observe His methods, are always amazed that they had never seen it before. This seminar will focus on our need to return to Christ’s original intentions and to discover how He trained His men for the evangelization of the world so that we can get the job done today.

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I. Introduction

A. Two reasons we should be concerned about discipleship

1. Jesus practiced and commanded it (Mt. 28:18-20)

2. The early church practiced it (II Tim. 2:2)

B. Perspective by keen observers of the life of Christ

1. “Every single time you build into the life of another person, you launch a process which, ideally, will never end” (Dr. Howard Hendricks).
2. “A leader may profess that Jesus is the head of his ministry, but when he strays from the principles of Jesus’ ministry, he’s really just taking over himself. Jesus’ methodology keeps everyone aware that He, and He alone, is the head of the church” (Dr. Carl Wilson).
3. “It took our Lord three years of life-to-life investment to accomplish His desire to pour His life into the lives of twelve men. Discipleship is not a static event or condition but a process that occurs because His life is being transferred to other lives over a period of days, months, and years. Jesus invested His life in these men. When He finished, He said in effect, ‘Go and do the same thing in another’s life’” (Dr. Allan Coppedge).
4. “Both from His words and from His actions, we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the Twelve. In His intercessory prayer (John 17:6), He speaks about the training He had given these men as if it had been the most important aspect of His own earthly ministry. In one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking, education of the disciples ensured that the Teacher’s influence on the world would be permanent. His kingdom would be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial, temporary impressions on the minds of the many...Therefore, had it not been for the Twelve, the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus might have perished from human history, with nothing remaining but a vague, mythical tradition. It would have had no historical value and little practical influence” (Dr. A.B. Bruce).

II. The Training of the Twelve

A. The Selection Process

1. First introduction by John the Baptist

2. The character and qualifications of the Twelve
 - a) Men of rare spiritual endowment: hungry for God

 - b) Men who truly love God

 - c) Men with a free conscience

 - d) Men with enlightened minds

 - e) Men who were teachable

 - f) Men who were faithful and loyal

 - g) “They were animated by a devotion to Jesus and to the divine kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice” (Bruce).

3. Jesus' appointment of the Twelve (approximately 16 months from the beginning of His public ministry)
 - a) Luke 6:12-16

 - b) Mark 3:13-19

 - c) John 17:6, 9, 24

 - d) Jesus preferred devoted men who had none of the advantages over uncommitted men who had them all.

4. Three distinguishable stages in the history of their fellowship with Him:
 - a) Believers in Him as the Christ and occasionally accompanied Him when it was convenient

 - b) The disciples were present with Christ most of the time

 - c) The Twelve were chosen from the masses of His followers and were formed into a select band of men whom He would train to accomplish the great work of apostleship

5. The Disciple's Square: The Four P's in Jesus' relationship with the Twelve
 - a) Pedagogue: a wise and knowledgeable Teacher

 - b) Pupil: a person willing to learn

 - c) Purpose: a clear purpose

 - d) Plan: a master plan for development

B. The Early Days: Observation and Invitation to Associate with Him

1. It was necessary for the Twelve to see His works and to hear His words

2. The main part of their discipleship in the early days of His ministry was spent watching and listening

3. Jesus taught them the doctrine of the kingdom
 - a) The nature of the divine kingdom

 - b) The righteousness of the kingdom

 - c) The ethics of the kingdom

- d) The religion of the kingdom
 - e) The fruit of the kingdom
 - f) The use of parables: the outstanding features of the kingdom
4. Jesus performed many miracles in their presence
- a) His labors among the suffering
 - b) Casting out demons
 - c) His vast activity and extraordinary zeal
 - d) His divine compassion

C. The Twelve in Ministry Training

1. Ten Characteristics of Jesus' disciples as they were being trained

- a) They were called by Jesus

- b) Their relationship with Jesus was personal

- c) Their inner and outer lives were controlled by Jesus

- d) They learned from Jesus

- e) Their whole life was shaped by Jesus

- f) They accepted Jesus' unconditional authority

- g) They carefully listened to Him

- h) They suffered with Jesus

- i) They learned to serve with Him

j) They began to lead others to Him

2. What Jesus Taught the Twelve

a) The fear of the Lord

b) God's decrees, laws, commands, and statutes

c) Righteousness

d) God's paths

e) Good judgment

3. Jesus as Teacher

a) He taught them the way of God in truth

b) He taught them how to pray

c) He offered Himself as the only way to fulfill the Law

- d) He taught with authority and dignity
- e) He drew His disciples close to Him
- f) He showed them how to live
- g) He imparted a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to them
- h) He shaped and transformed their lives
- i) His training was informal, rather than ritualistic and formal
- j) His instruction was unsystematic and occasional
- k) His training effectively prepared them for their world-wide mission

- 4. First attempts at evangelism: Teams of two
 - a) The sphere assigned for the work

- b) The nature of their assignment
 - c) Jesus' instructions for carrying it out
 - d) The results of the mission
 - e) "If Christ had neglected this work (of training the Twelve) and given Himself completely to the work of evangelism among the masses, there would have been very little hope for the kingdom of heaven" (Bruce).
 - f) They learned that Christ would take care of them
5. What the disciples learned
- a) The necessity of prayer
 - b) The problem of an inadequate labor force
 - c) That the heart of the solution is multiplication

- d) The importance of living under authority
 - e) The importance of choosing a target audience
6. Delegation and the training of the Seventy-two
- a) Jesus gave them definite assignments
 - b) They evangelized in Judea and Perea by planting house churches
 - c) The Twelve supervised the Seventy-two as Jesus had supervised the Twelve
 - d) The Seventy-two shared their amazing successes
 - e) Jesus had formed the Twelve into a body that could work together in a hostile world
7. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- a) He called on the disciples to reach out to the whole world
 - b) He had taught them multiplying ministry and the need to depend on His grace and on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit

8. The Great Commission

- a) The authority of Jesus behind them

- b) The primary command

- c) How the three participles modify the action of the main verb and shed light on the task of making disciples for Christ's kingdom

- d) The promise of His presence to the end of the world

D. Rationale for Discipleship Today

1. It was commanded and modeled by our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It was taught and practiced by the Apostles

3. It is one of the primary and most effective means by which new believers grow to maturity in Christ.

4. It is the best way to ensure that the church will be effective in its mission to evangelize the world.

5. It is the only way to ensure the kingdom of God will grow exponentially.

6. It exposes the unbiblical practice of elevating the clergy over the laity (clericalism) and involves all of God's children in building His church.

7. It is the chief means by which one generation of believers passes the gospel to the younger generation.

8. It reduces the need for expensive and ineffective programs in the church.

9. It produces leaders for the church and the missionary enterprise.

10. It offers the only consistent way to foster high accountability.

11. It preserves the fruit of evangelistic success.

12. It raises the moral quality of the church.

13. It strengthens and nourishes families.

14. It is personal and relational.

15. It creates an environment for careful pastoral oversight.

Recommended Resources

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