

# HOLINESS AND DISCIPLESHIP

by

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Wesleyan theology has made a distinct contribution to the Church's understanding of Christian holiness in three areas:

- I. Holiness as an over-arching theme in scriptural truth.
- II. Holiness as containing a crisis point in Christian experience called Entire Sanctification.
- III. Holiness of heart worked out in holiness of life by means of spiritual disciplines.

Because the second of these, i.e. the experience of entire sanctification, has been the point most often neglected by both Wesleyans and non-Wesleyans alike, there has been a tendency to focus a great deal of energy and resources on the articulation and propagation of this central truth. And it is quite right that this should be an area of major concern for the Wesleyan tradition.

At the same time faithfulness to Scripture and to our special theological heritage makes us conscious that this distinctive emphasis upon entire sanctification can never be divorced from the context of the other two major contributions Wesleyan theology has made. If or when this should happen, a grave disservice will have been done to the cause of truth and the holiness tradition, for it would isolate the experience of entire sanctification from its larger scriptural framework on the

one hand, while failing to see that its full implications were worked out in godly living on the other. It is for the purpose of preventing any such isolation of one part of our theological heritage from the rest that I would like to look at the subject of holiness and discipleship in relation to all three of the above mentioned distinctives.

### **Holiness and the People of God**

The concept of holiness as an over-arching theme in Scripture begins with the character of the God of Scripture: He is the ultimate Holy One. Perhaps the clearest revelation of the centrality of God's holiness comes in the visions of Isaiah (Isaiah 6) and John (Revelation 4), where both prophet from the Old Testament and apostle from the New Testament are permitted to see into the eternal world and hear the heavenly creatures declare the glory of God. And what do they declare? That He is holy, holy, holy. This is the essence of His being, and as John so graphically puts it, this is the way He was, this is the way He is, and this is the way He will be. They have caught a vision of the unchangeable nature of God. It is no accident then that this kind of revelation produced in a man like Isaiah a distinctive title for the Lord of his fathers, for one who has seen what God is really like could not help but characterize Him as the Holy One of Israel.

But not only is God the Father styled in the Bible as holy, but the Son and the Spirit are as well. At the announcement of the incarnation the angel declares that Jesus is to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and that "the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:34). This also becomes the confession of His disciples at a crucial turning point in His ministry. After Jesus had watched many followers go away, He looked to the Twelve and asked, "Will you also go away?" Peter responds for the whole group in his declaration of their conviction that they have come to believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69). And regarding the Spirit of God it is not a happen-chance that the third person of the Trinity is almost always referred to as the Holy Spirit; because Holy is what God is like!

Even non-evangelicals have recognized the central place holiness occupies in a right understanding of God. Dr. Edmond Jacob in his *Theology of the Old Testament* writes: "Holiness is not one divine quality among others, even the chiefest, for it expresses what

is characteristic of God and corresponds precisely to his deity . . . Yahweh is the holy one par excellence . . .  
.[1] “What is being said is that God’s holiness is not just one divine attribute among all the others, but that it is the very essence of His nature. To be sure He is many things: Justice, Wrath, Love, etc.; but each is always qualified by His holiness, i.e., it is holy justice, holy wrath, or holy love. It may not be insignificant that when Isaiah and John saw their visions of what God was like that the creatures around the throne were not crying, Love, Love, Love; even though love is extremely important to our understanding of what God is like. A. B. Davidson, speaking to this issue in his discussion of the title “The HOLY One of Israel,” concludes:

No other epithet given to Yahweh is ever used in the same way. For example, Jehovah is righteous; but ‘the righteous one,’ in the absolute or abstract sense, is a term never applied to Him—nor ‘the gracious,’ and the like. It seems clear, therefore, that Kadosh is not a word that expresses any attribute of deity, but deity itself.[2]

If the holiness of Scripture begins with the character of God, it moves quickly to the question of the holiness of men. In the opening verses of the Bible God reveals how He made man in His own image and likeness. This likeness refers to the natural image of God in man as well as the moral image. The natural image includes things like man’s dominion over the creation, his spirituality and immortality, and his personality, including his reason, language, memory, emotions, etc. The moral image refers to that which reflects the moral character of God, i.e., that which relates to matters of right and wrong, and here the Scriptures indicate that the content of this moral image consisted in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). This is also to be inferred from the data regarding the nature of God Himself: if He is holy, and He made man like Himself, it follows that in some sense man was designed to be holy as well. To be sure it is a derived holiness, for only God is originally holy,

but it is nevertheless a holiness like the holiness of God.<sup>[3]</sup>

But men are not holy! They have fallen into sin and disobedience, and rebellion has become characteristic of their life. Beginning with Adam in Genesis 3 the Scripture speaks of fallen, sinful man; or in other words he is unholy, i.e., unlike the moral nature of God his Creator. Yet, in spite of the universality of this unholiness (Romans 5:12ff.), God still desires for men to be like Himself, and in His grace He has designed a scheme of redemption to make men holy again and restore them to fellowship with Himself. Indeed, the whole plan of salvation is laid out in the Scripture for the purpose of remaking man again in the moral image of God, i.e., like His holy character. There is thus a teleological aim related to all of His redemptive design, viz., men characterized by the moral holiness of God. He made this purpose vividly clear in the establishment of His covenant with Israel, when He repeatedly reminded them, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

It is at this point, in the giving of the Old Covenant at Mt. Sinai, that we get one of the most explicit statements from God about the kind of people for which He is looking to be a people of His own possession. The account of this event in Exodus 19 serves as an important indicator of the characteristics that God wants to see in a people called by His Name. The first thing that the story reveals is that at this point Israel is a redeemed people, a nation that has been delivered both physically and spiritually from the oppression of the Egyptians. They have not been saved by keeping the law, which only begins to be given in chapter 19, but they have been redeemed by the gracious hand of a supernatural God. Salvation by grace is not strictly a New Testament concept. In both testaments the proper order is Grace first, then Law—Law coming as a means of working out the implications of Grace in everyday living.

While one cannot be a part of the people of God without being delivered, neither can one be part of God’s special possession without a willingness to continue living under His control. This is the question of authority. God wants to rule over His people as a King, and so important was this lesson that Israel was not permitted an earthly king for many generations. Even then he was never the absolute ruler after the pattern of other kings in the Ancient Near East, because in Israel

God was the ultimate King. And His kingship needs to be understood in terms of His authority over men's lives. This is why the introduction to the covenant offer is prefaced with the conditional elements, "if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant." For to live under His authority in a practical way means to obey Him.

The third characteristic of a godly people described in this passage is that they are to be priests. This is the matter of outreach and service. Priests were to serve both God and the people at the same time. They were mediators. They spent time with God, and then bore His message to men; their role thus included a teaching responsibility. But they also gathered men together to bring them into the presence of God, instructing them how to pray, offer sacrifices, seek forgiveness, etc. They stood between God and men for the purposes of drawing them together. Similarly, God intended Israel to play a priestly role in relation to the whole world; "all the earth is mine," He tells them, for He is concerned about all men. This is the same role He envisioned when He first established a covenant with Abraham and promised the patriarch that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). God is choosing a people for a responsibility, viz., the task of reaching out to a world separated from God and lost in sin. This is the work assignment God has designed for all those who are called His people. They are not only to be something, but also to do something!

Furthermore, they are "to be" and "to do" with other people who are committed to the same God, and therefore have the same perspective, commandments, and promises. They are a nation of people. This does not mean that there is no individual commitment to God, but it means that individual relationships with the Lord were to be pursued with others who enjoyed this same personal walk with God.<sup>[4]</sup> This is the issue of the fellowship of believers. Those who had been redeemed were to live and serve together under God's authority, working out the implications of their faith and testifying to that reality in the world, while they were strengthening and encouraging one another as the people of God.

Lastly, the character of this people was unusually significant. They were to be a holy people. They were to be holy for two reasons. One because they were to be like a holy God who had called them to live in

fellowship with Himself, and they could not live with Him unless they were like Him, holy as He was holy. Their holiness then related to what they were in relation to God. But it also related to what He had called them to do, i.e., be priests to the nations. For they were to be an accurate reflection of what God was like to the peoples of the earth; God wanted to make Himself known, He wanted to be known for what He was, i.e., as holy, and He chose Israel for that purpose. They could not fulfill their role in the world and in God's plan for the redemption of the whole of mankind without representing God faithfully to men, and this could only be done if His character, His Name, was seen as holy.<sup>[5]</sup> So their holiness not only affected their relationship with God, it also affected their mission in the world. The holiness of their character then carries implications for both one's walk with God and one's witness to the world. No wonder God was looking for a holy people!

Apparently from God's perspective holiness is not an optional extra for those who are members of the people of God. He is looking for a people who are holy as He is holy; He began making that clear with the establishment of the Old Covenant and continues to make His desires known under the New. The God who does not change speaks again through His apostle to the Christian Church.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

And His reason for wanting the same kind of people has not changed: "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16).

These are some of the essential elements then in being a people of God's own possession: a redeemed

people, living in obedience to the authority of God the King, prepared to minister to the world in priestly service, encouraging one another in their life of faith, and reflecting the holy character of the Lord. By the same token all these factors may legitimately be seen as characteristics of a holy people, viz., they are a redeemed people who belong to God, who are walking in obedient submission to His kingly rule, who are ministering to the world as His priests, and who are stimulating each other to faithfulness in their personal and corporate commitment to the Lord. Thus, a brief review of the introduction to the Old Covenant makes it quite clear that the holiness for which God is looking in men is manifestly bound up with matters of redemption, authority, outreach, and fellowship.

When one turns to the New Testament, it is important to observe that the basic ingredients of being the people of God have not changed. God is still holy, and He still looks for a people to reflect His holiness. There is some further understanding to be sure; God is making the full revelation of His nature manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. If one wishes to know how the holiness of God looks in human form, then he has only to carefully observe the life and character of the Lord Jesus. It is not for nothing that Peter describes Him as the Holy One of God, for He not only belongs to the Father, but He also is the full revelation of that holiness that is God's. So, the New Testament understanding of holiness may be richer and more complete than that of the Old, but it is not different in basic content. For those who are convinced that the God of the New Testament is the same as the Holy One of Israel that comes as no surprise.

In the New Testament the people of God are described in terms of those who are disciples of Jesus, and the process of making them into God's own possession is what we are now calling discipleship.<sup>[6]</sup> This life of discipleship begins, in parallel to its Old Testament counterpart, with redemption, when men are called to repent of their sins and believe on the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14–15). Here is where men begin to follow Jesus: when they turn away from disobedience or unholiness and put their faith in Him. These are, of course, the conditions for salvation by grace, viz., repentance and belief. This is the experience sometimes described as initial sanctification, because it

begins the process of making men holy like the character of the Lord.

Both Matthew and Mark record that after an introduction to the conditions of redemption, Jesus moves almost immediately to call men to follow Him, and in so doing gives a clear idea of the other characteristics for which He is looking in disciples. Matthew in particular seems to be at pains to present the call of the first disciples and the definition of content of a life of discipleship in terms of the establishment of a New Covenant. Matthew, as the writer of the “Jewish gospel,” lays out his material to make clear that what is happening under Jesus is a continuation and fulfillment of what God has already done under the Old Covenant. Thus, he opens with a word about the redemption of men, couched in terms of the kingdom of God in chapter 4, and then moves to give the content of the New Covenant in chapters 5–7. Just as Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Old Covenant, so Jesus goes up on the mount to give His followers certain basic covenant stipulations. It is in both the call of the disciples and in the giving them the heart of the New Covenant that we get a fairly good indication of the kind of people the Lord wants for disciples in the new era.

For those who have experienced the redeeming grace of God as they came in repentance and faith, the next step is described in Jesus’ statement, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The command, “Follow me,” first raises the issue of authority; either they will choose to obey or not to obey. If they choose to follow Him, it means they are placing their lives, at least in an initial way, under His direction. This is also implied in any call to live under the “kingdom of God,” i.e., the reign of God now being manifest in the person of Jesus. To be a disciple is to bring one’s life under the control of the Lord, and without this there can be no process of discipleship as the New Testament describes it.

What are the practical implications of this kind of authority under the New Covenant? Jesus begins to spell this out in the Sermon on the Mount when He addresses the question of the relationship of His disciples to the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17–21). They were not only to live under the law and the prophets, but under the fullest implications of the moral law contained in them. Jesus spends considerable time spelling out the most complete meaning of that moral law contained in the Old Testament, and then couples

this with a statement about the authority of His own words at the end of the discourse (Matthew 7:24–27). The Word of God both in the Old Testament and in Jesus becomes the standard of authority for those who desire to be disciples of the Lord.

If men are willing to submit to His authority and walk in obedient faith, then Jesus promises to make them fishers of men. Here is the responsibility of outreach and ministry. Part of being a disciple is being trained to bear the message of the gospel to the world and draw men to Christ. This is why Jesus describes the work of the disciples in terms of salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16); they are to attract others to a life of intimate fellowship with God, and guide them into this personal relationship. They are His lights in a dark world to help individuals find their way to God.

Further, the disciples are called together to follow Jesus. They form an apostolic band of men who are not only committed to Jesus, but who also develop a commitment to each other. While each is learning from Jesus personally, they are also interacting with one another and growing together in their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord. They form the fellowship of God's people, and the nucleus of the New Israel. Even the number twelve is symbolic of their continuity with God's design in the tribes of Israel under the Old Covenant.

And what is to be the character of these disciples? They are not in this immediate context referred to as holy. Has God's purpose changed in this regard? Perhaps some light may be shed on this with another look at the command of Jesus, "Follow me." While this certainly refers to the issue of authority and obedience, it also seems to imply in the context of the whole of the gospel record that Jesus intended for His followers to become like Himself. "Follow me" appears designed to allow Him to make men like His own character and could easily be paraphrased, "Come be like me." This certainly was one of His goals in the years that He spent with the twelve; by patient teaching and example He was working on building their character. They learned by association and demonstration while they lived in intimate fellowship with Jesus for three years.

What is this character that He is imparting? If Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Holy One of Israel, then is it any wonder that His disciples came to confess Him as the Holy One of God? May not holiness of

character be described as Christ-likeness? And is this not the character that Jesus lays before His followers in the beatitudes at the very outset of the giving of the New Covenant (Matthew 5:3–12)? With all the other parallels between the giving of the Old Covenant and the New, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that on the question of character, the concept of a holy nation under the earlier dispensation has been translated to a living demonstration of holiness in the person of Jesus Christ in the new age. Jesus as the incarnate form of the holy Godhead is the enfleshed manifestation of holiness of character even if the word “holy” itself does not appear prominently in these first descriptions of His public ministry. And He is calling His disciples to be like Himself, viz., Holy in character.

### **The Process of Discipleship**

The process of being like Jesus began for the disciples with their conversion or with what is otherwise called initial sanctification. But the character of the Twelve was not immediately like that of their Master. Character building is a process, and so Jesus, knowing this, invested three years of His life in developing the character of these disciples. This involved that growth in grace which is sometimes designated as progressive sanctification, i.e., that development of character under the authority of Jesus in the company of others of like commitment. While the Gospels reveal some very obvious gaps in the lives of the Twelve, it is also clear that some progress is being made; spiritual growth is taking place. Several factors contribute most significantly to this. One is the living pattern of the character of Jesus. They observe the holiness of God revealed in Jesus through His attitudes, conduct and personal relations. They have in Him a model of holy character. And coupled with this they also have His direct supervision of the development of their own lives, and this is right at the heart of discipleship. Jesus disciplined those twelve men by teaching them what and how to be all that God wanted them to be. He invested Himself in them; it was a time-consuming, laborious, and often painful task, but it was God’s plan for building godly men.

Another factor closely interwoven in the fabric of spiritual growth was the group of spiritual disciplines that Jesus began to build into His men from the very earliest days. Some of these have to be inferred from

the data, like the importance of knowledge and truth, and thus the necessity of the study of the Word of God; or like the importance of growing with other disciples, and thus the significance of being a regular part of a small fellowship of like-minded men. But other disciplines are more explicit, e.g., giving, praying, and fasting (Matthew 6:1–18). All of these were carefully guarded to prevent them from being done for the wrong reasons—a trap into which the Pharisees had fallen in Jesus' day. But they were to be cultivated as disciplines, because these were the normal ways in which one developed his relation with God—they were the instruments of knowing Him and His will more perfectly, and therefore, became very important to anyone who wanted to be like His holy character.

Yet, in spite of the disciplined life that the Twelve developed and the investment of Jesus in them over a three-year period, they still lacked something in their own character when it was time for Him to leave them. Jesus was fully aware of this. He knew that what had happened in their lives was very significant, but He also knew that it was incomplete. That is why He spent the largest part of His last evening with them explaining the coming of the Holy Spirit and its implications for their lives. Then He closed with a prayer for their sanctification. Both the fulfillment of His teaching and the answer to His prayer came on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus modeled holiness before them for three years, closed His last night with them by praying that the Holy Father would make them holy in a way they were not yet holy, and then poured out the Holy Spirit upon them to give them a holiness of life they had not known before. This is the reason that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is so crucial for discipleship, for Jesus knew His disciples could not be like Him without it.

So, the connection between holiness and discipleship has several key points. It begins with initial sanctification when one first establishes a relationship with Jesus by repentance and faith. It continues in progressive sanctification as one follows Jesus, learning from the model of His character and building spiritual disciplines into one's life. It comes to another crucial point in entire sanctification when the Holy Spirit assumes a more absolute control of the life of the disciple. But it does not end with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, here is where the full implications of a holy heart begin to be worked out in a holy character.

Real growth in both character and effective service begins with the experience of entire sanctification. And this further, more significant spiritual growth is undergirded with the same spiritual disciplines that the disciples learned before Pentecost. If these disciplines were designed to assist a disciple in knowing God and His will more perfectly, then their full value becomes more evident when they serve a disciple who is completely consecrated to God and fully surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit. Now, that total consecration can be coupled with those spiritual disciplines to work out God's perfect will in every area of a disciple's character and service.[\[7\]](#)

### **Holiness and the Great Commission**

With this introduction to the process of making disciples, we turn to some of the specifics that relate holiness and discipleship. At the end of a three-year process of discipleship, Jesus closed His time in the flesh with commandments. In these two final pieces of instruction to the men whom Jesus His disciples with two significant has trained, we find again the crucial ingredients that make up a holy people who are God's own special possession. In these last appearances to those who were to provide spiritual leadership for the transformation of the world, Jesus again alluded to the matter of their being a redeemed people of God, dealt once more with the question of authority in their lives, challenged them to a worldwide outreach, reinforced their commitment to a fellowship of like-minded people, and finally, added one more significant command relating to the building of their holy character.

Jesus' next-to-the-last commandment is given in Matthew 28 and is commonly styled the Great Commission. Here Jesus is clearly speaking to believing disciples. They not only have been redeemed after having met the conditions of repentance and faith, but they have walked with Him in faith and have seen their spiritual lives grow in the three years they have lived in personal contact with Jesus. When they gather together with Him on a mountain in Galilee they worship Him. They are men of faith in Jesus Christ. There is no question about their being the redeemed people of God.

They are also men who are living under the authority of Jesus. They went to the mountain in Galilee in response to a commandment of the risen Christ

when He first appeared in Jerusalem. And having met Him in obedience, they are further reminded by Jesus of the authority that He has from the Father. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me," is His preface to the Great Commission. And it is the authority that God has given Him on earth that certainly is related to His direction over the lives of those that call themselves disciples. But now a further element related to this question of authority is raised by Jesus in His introduction to the Great Commission. This is so that the disciples are clearly to understand that the going and making of disciples of all nations is based on the authoritative commandment given to them by Jesus. They are not fulfilling this task because they personally think it is a good idea, or because some people desire to hear the Word of God, or because circumstances would seem to indicate this as a natural development of their training under Jesus. But rather the going forth to make disciples is bound up with their willingness to walk in obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ over their lives as disciples. The implication of that fact seems unusually significant for us in the twentieth century. For if we too are submitting ourselves to His authority, it will be very difficult to escape the conclusion that we also have been commissioned to make disciples of all nations.

The heart of the Great Commission, of course, is the injunction to make disciples. It is not just a commandment to proclaim the gospel, as some of the older translations suggest. A study of the verbs in the original text of verses 19 and 20 makes clear that there is one major thrust based upon the one primary verb, i.e., "make disciples." And it is upon this that three participles depend: going, baptizing and teaching. So, the outreach is more specifically defined now than ever before in the history of God's preparing a people for service in His name. Men are to go, to be sure, and this is a part of outreach; but the purpose of going is to make disciples. This is how men under the new dispensation are to be priests to the world, fishers of men, salt and light to the present age.

Further, Jesus reminds them implicitly of the crucial need to be a part of a fellowship of those who are His disciples. The commission is given to a group of disciples. The imperative tense in verse 19 of "make disciples" is second person, plural: you all make disciples. But in addition to fulfilling the Great Commission in the company with other disciples, Jesus

reminds them of another dimension of fellowship. That comes with the closing promise of His own personal presence to those who are involved in the task of making disciples: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” It is interesting to observe that when Jesus first called these men to be His disciples, He gave them both a command and a promise. There, in Matthew 4, the command was to follow Him, and that was coupled with a promise, “I will make you to be fishers of men.” Now the order of commandment and promise is reversed. At the end of His training the commandment is to go and make disciples of all nations, and that is followed by the promise of the presence of Jesus with them forever.

If in the Great Commission there are references to the people of God in terms of redemption, authority, outreach, and fellowship, may we then ask where are the references to character and holiness? These are not found principally in the passage in Matthew 28 [\[8\]](#), but come in the last command of Jesus to His disciples given to them in Luke 24 and Acts 1. The character question has been dealt with significantly over the past three years. They have come to an experience of initial sanctification at conversion, and this has been followed by progressive sanctification during their years with Jesus. But now He speaks to them in terms of an additional aspect of the shaping of their character. That relates to His prayer for them for their complete sanctification in John 17, and is now couched in terms of a commandment to wait for “the promise of the Father.” As Acts 1 makes quite clear, the promise of the Father refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit; for this is the means to their more entire sanctification. Apparently, this part of making the disciples holy was so crucial that Jesus would not let them begin the urgent task of fulfilling the Great Commission until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. Again, holiness of life is intimately bound up with the ministry to which God has called all believers, i.e., making disciples in all nations.

### **The Significance of Entire Sanctification for Discipleship**

The role of entire sanctification or the baptism of the Holy Spirit for discipleship seems to be significant in three major areas. One of these refers to what the disciples were and relates to the question of being or

character. Another relates to the work that Jesus had called them to do. This is the matter of ministry or service. And the third area is a connective area between what they were to be and what they were to do.

The first area in which entire sanctification is significant for the concept of discipleship relates to the fact that after Pentecost God is still looking for holy people. This brings us once again to the matter of character. Believers cannot be a holy people without being like the Father or like the Son, and the experience of entire sanctification is a part of that process. It seems to make its impact felt in at least four ways.

(1) Entire sanctification places our will under the full control of the Holy Spirit, with the result that God can work out His perfectly holy character in our lives. God's character is communicated through His will, then from His will to our will, and last through our will to our character. If our will is submitted to the will of God, then His holy character can be translated into our character. How this transformation takes place is described in a number of different ways. This experience is so complex that no one figure of speech or group of terms adequately describes all that transpires in this event. Thus, when our will, which controls our character, is completely submitted to the control of the will of God, which is directed by His holy character, this experience of submission may be described in terms of baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit, or in terms of the cleansing or purification of our sinful nature, or in terms of entire sanctification, or in terms of a heart made perfect in love. Each of these refers to a different dimension in that point of commitment. When the will is surrendered to God's will, then it is completely controlled by the will of God expressed through His Holy Spirit. The entireness of sanctification refers in significant measure to the entire consecration of the will and therefore of the life to a holy God in that experience. It may further be defined as a purifying of a life in terms of purification from sinfulness or a self-will orientation, for one can no longer be even partially controlled by self-will, if one's total will has been submitted to the will of God. Further at that moment, the individual is given a motivation in his heart to love as God loves, i.e., unconditionally, and this is usually described in terms of perfect love.

All of the above takes place at that point of crisis called entire sanctification, and it centers around our

will being completely under the control of God's will. But that needs also to be understood in terms of a completely consecrated will that now must control our character. Two dimensions in particular of translating the experience of our will to our character are of special significance. One of these has to do with the description of our character in terms of perfect love. This deals primarily with attitudes. The other area in which our consecrated will is worked out through our character is in terms of righteous living. This is the question of absolute obedience in our conduct. While the surrender of our will in entire sanctification takes place in a moment, the working out its implications in our character, particularly in the areas of attitude and conduct, is the process of growth after sanctification. And it is at this point that discipleship becomes absolutely essential for sanctified living. For it is in these areas of learning the implications of a heart of perfect love and a life of ethical righteousness in all areas of behavior that we so urgently need the spiritual disciplines of discipleship and the model of a disciple-maker.

(2) Entire sanctification also affects the character of a disciple relative to his willingness to grow. A disciple who has had his self-will/sinful nature purged in entire sanctification should be more teachable. The Holy Spirit now in fuller control of his life should be able to work out the holy character of God in his character particularly in the areas of attitudes and conduct, for now the implications of godliness do not threaten the self-orientation of a disciple. And because he should have a more teachable spirit, this is the place where real growth and maturity can take place.

(3) With entire sanctification a power from the Holy Spirit is available for a more disciplined life. One who has been cleansed from self-will now has dealt with the most significant problem of discipline, i.e., the denial of self. Discipline in all areas means denying self some things in order to accomplish more significant goals. Thus one who has seen the need for dealing with his independent self-will is now in a position to receive help from the Holy Spirit to make spiritual disciplines more effective in his life.[\[9\]](#)

(4) The last reason that entire sanctification seems to have such a significant impact on the life of a disciple is that with the fullness of the Holy Spirit there comes a power for victorious, Christian living. Because the self-will has been dealt with, the ability to resist

temptation, which appeals chiefly to the self, is much greater, and consistent victory over sin becomes possible.

The second major area in which sanctification is significant for discipleship relates to the question of authority, and it touches both the character of the disciple—what he is, and his ministry—what he does. The meeting place between authority and holiness in this context relates to the conditions of entire sanctification which are the same as those for a disciple who is living under the absolute, kingly rule of God. For both of these two things are necessary. One is the total consecration of the life to God which involves a surrender of self-will and a complete willingness to obey. The second is trust. It is total faith which is that which makes possible total consecration. It is this full consecration and complete confidence in God that are conditional elements for entire sanctification and thus are crucially bound up in what the grace of God does in changing our nature to make it holy. But these two also are intimately wrapped up in living under the total authority of God as the absolute king over our lives and thus they also are crucially bound up in what He is directing us to do with our lives.

The last major area in which sanctification makes its impact on the life of discipleship has to do with the ministry to which disciples are called. This includes at least three things.

First of all, it relates to the power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth. This is the power for outreach to make fishers of men to be a kingdom of priests and involves the power of the disciple to reproduce his life in other people's lives.

This brings us to the second matter which is the principle that men produce what they are. To make godly disciples men must be godly disciples. Since all disciples are called to be a part of the fulfilling of the Great Commission from Jesus' perspective they need to have the kind of character through the fullness of the Holy Spirit that will make it possible to produce other men and women whose character will be like Jesus. So, for the purposes of disciple-making by example association and teaching through life-to-life investment the experience of entire sanctification is essential.

Thirdly with entire sanctification the Holy Spirit has total control in the life of a disciple over his spiritual

gifts other God-given abilities time resources and energy for the work and ministry. When the Spirit has this kind of complete responsibility in these areas it is far easier for all of them to be used for ministry in the body of Christ. It is easier to learn how one functions in the body of Christ because now the disciple does not have to have this job or carry that responsibility but with the surrender of his self-will he now is available to be used of God according to His design for the individual in the Church.[\[10\]](#)

### **The Significance of Discipleship for Sanctified Living**

The effects of discipleship upon the individual who has experienced entire sanctification are primarily twofold. The first of these is that it makes it possible to maintain the experience of sanctifying grace. There is no unconditional eternal security for the entirely sanctified any more than for the justified. Wesleyans are quite agreed on the latter but sometimes have not been as vocal about the former. The result has been that some may (even subconsciously) assume that entire sanctification is automatically a permanent possession. Experience should warn us that this can be a deadly trap indeed. Not only can the experience be lost, it certainly will be unless the conditions of total consecration to God's perfect will and of total trust in Him leading to full obedience are continually met.

Here the disciple has not only the model and teaching of Jesus to assist him but he has the spiritual disciplines built into his life that are necessary for keeping his life under the full control of God's sanctifying Spirit. These disciplines (e.g., daily time in searching the Scripture and private prayer) have been learned to help the disciple know God and obey His will. They are now used to do just that in a fuller way, in the life of one who after entire sanctification is committed to knowing and trusting God more completely and to walking by faith in full obedience to His perfect will. For example, how can one live under God's perfect will if he does not know that will? And can God's will be known without diligent searching of the Scripture? Thus, the daily discipline of Bible study becomes one of the underpinnings of a life fully under God's control.

Another aspect of discipleship that assists in the maintaining of the experience of entire sanctification is

the regular fellowship with others committed to holy living. This consistent fellowship with a few other disciples provides a place for accountability in one's spiritual life that means regular attention will be given to spiritual examination. Being accountable to others means the disciple must continually check up on himself to see if he is walking in obedience to God's perfect will for him. In addition, the fellowship with God's people may be one of His means of giving guidance regarding His will for the individual. The life of discipleship then makes it possible to keep one's will and life under the full control of the Holy Spirit and thus maintain the experience of God's sanctifying grace.

Closely related to this is a second way in which discipleship is significant for sanctified living. It relates to spiritual growth after entire sanctification. In this area discipleship is what makes possible the working out of the implications of a will fully surrendered to God's will and a life completely under His control. Now that the self-will of the sin nature has been dealt with in entire sanctification, this is when real growth should take place in the individual, there no longer being a struggle between self-will and God's will. Now the spiritual disciplines learned in the discipleship process for the purpose of growth in godliness before sanctification become even more significant after that experience. For subsequent to entire sanctification these tools for knowing God's will can be applied without the possible reservations about doing that will. Thus, the sanctified individual urgently needs these spiritual disciplines to discover the full implications of a heart of perfect love and of a life committed to ethical righteousness. For the full implications of God's total control will only become apparent through the study of the Word, significant prayer time, the regular meeting with a few other like-minded disciples, fasting to know God's will, the model of a disciple-maker, and other aspects of the discipleship process.

Discipleship finds its significance then for sanctified living in that it is what makes it possible to maintain an experience of entire sanctification, and at the same time work out its full implications in the attitudes, behavior and interpersonal relationships of the individual. It may well be that failure to give proper attention to making disciples as a complement to preaching sanctification is the reason that so many do not retain their experience of sanctifying grace, while others never seem to be able to make real spiritual

progress after consecrating their lives to God's sanctifying Spirit.[\[11\]](#)

### **The Means of Making Disciples**

When Jesus set out to create a holy people, i.e., to make disciples, how did He go about it? What were His tools for building godly men? The first thing He did was invest His own life in them. This was one of the purposes of the incarnation, to demonstrate the process of making disciples after the likeness and character of a Holy God. What He did in the discipleship process then ought to become a pattern for all who have been given the commission to make disciples in all nations.

This life-to-life investment included four elements. (1) He became a model of the kind of godly life the Father wants to see in every Christian. He who was God in the flesh was able to manifest the kind of holiness of character in His attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal relationships that provided a concrete example of the moral image of God that He wanted to see restored in fallen man. Jesus became a demonstration of holiness with a human face, and by so doing became a model of life and character for everyone desiring to be remade in the image of the Holy One of the universe.

(2) Jesus invested Himself in His disciples by teaching them a knowledge of the truth. Because men needed an understanding of the truth in order to conform their lives to God's perfect will the communication of God's truth was very significant. Without it men could not know God's will, and thus could not become a holy people or perform His ministry in the world. Right understanding is always essential for right living, and so Jesus spent large amounts of time teaching His disciples. Some of the teaching was done by a formal approach, such as the Sermon on the Mount or His discourse at the Last Supper, and some of it was done in a much more informal way, while they were traveling, or sitting beside a well, or as He mixed with people in everyday life situations. But it was all a part of His communication of truth, and it was designed to be the verbal complement to the living demonstration of the truth which He was modeling in His own life before them.

(3) He was then a model and a teacher of the truth in His training of the twelve, but also He was one

who supervised the building into their priorities of the disciplines necessary to cultivate their relationship with God and make it possible for Him to work out His will in their lives and ministries. To be disciples meant to be disciplined followers of Jesus, and discipline is not developed in a day. So, a part of Jesus' investment in His men was helping them learn how to get these spiritual disciplines incorporated into their everyday experience. So, for example, after modeling His own prayer life before them and teaching them in a structured setting about the importance of prayer, there came the day when they asked Him to teach them to pray. And in His response Jesus supervised their experience of learning to pray and of learning how to become praying disciples.

(4) Whereas the first three elements of Jesus' investment in His men relate primarily to their edification, the fourth pertains principally to equipping them for the work of ministry. He trained them for the responsibility of outreach and service that would be theirs when they began the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. All of this was intimately related to the above-mentioned factors. Jesus modeled before them effective ministry in terms of evangelism, disciple-making, and service. He taught the truth that they would need to carry on their ministries, and He helped them build into their lives the disciplines necessary for effective spiritual service. He then trained them in the kind of things they would later have to do, such as a ministry of service, when He had them assist in the feeding of the 5,000, or a ministry of proclamation, when He sent them on a preaching mission. This part of their education had to do with their activities in the service of the King. They were being equipped to make disciples and do the work of ministry within the Body of Christ and to the world, and their understanding of how to do these things was a part of what Jesus was imparting to them by His life-to-life investment.

Yet, after Jesus had spent three years of His life giving of Himself to His disciples He knew there was still something missing in their lives. So, while Jesus' investment of Himself was the first part of making disciples, there was also a second major factor in His plan, viz., the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When He had completed all He could do under the first category, He left them with instructions not to depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. After praying for their sanctification on His last

night with them, He took the occasion of His last post-resurrection appearance to them to enjoin them to wait for the promise of the Father. Both the answer to His prayer and the fulfillment of His promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit came about on the day of Pentecost when the disciples in company with other believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then and only then, did those men find themselves ready to fulfill the Great Commission. But as soon as the Holy Spirit had come in all His sanctifying fullness, the Twelve began immediately the task of making disciples. They stood forth proclaiming the gospel which led to the conversion and public declaration of this new-found faith in baptism by 3,000 souls, and then the disciples at once began to fulfill the second part of the Commission, i.e., teaching the new believers. And what did they teach these new converts in order to make them disciples? Just what they themselves had been taught. It was natural; they began to make disciples just like they had been made into disciples by Jesus. Acts 2 makes it clear that the new Christians enjoyed the fellowship of the apostles; in other words, they lived close enough to the Twelve to see them model holy living in front of them. They had some living examples of disciples. Then they were trained by the apostle's teaching; they were taught a knowledge of the truth just as Jesus had done earlier with His men. Further, the disciples began to help them build spiritual disciplines into their lives; for example, they began to teach them to pray as they had been taught. And lastly, they began to lead the Church in a ministry of sacrificial service that led to a sharing of possessions as any had need, and apparently also to equip the new believers for a ministry of outreach, the Lord adding to their number day by day. It seems likely that they recognized the need of the new disciples to be filled with the Holy Spirit as a part of the discipleship process, and encouraged them in this experience. At least one possible interpretation of Acts 4 sees the company to whom Peter and John returned as those who became believers on the day of Pentecost, and who were then ready to receive the fullness of God's sanctifying Spirit that they too might carry on the ministry of witness with the power and boldness of the apostles.

This picture of the relation of Jesus' discipleship activity to the coming of the Holy Spirit ought to raise some very serious questions for those of us in the Wesleyan tradition. We are absolutely committed to the

experience of sanctifying grace. Are we as committed to the matter of investing our lives in a few individuals? Jesus apparently thought both were essential, and spent three years of His life pouring Himself into the Twelve. Are we doing the same thing?

Is it possible that our strong emphasis on the experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit has led us to conclude (perhaps even subconsciously) that the Holy Spirit does everything in the life of a believer that Jesus does? With regard to the immediate relation with the Godhead, He does play an irreplaceable role. But with regard to the discipleship process can He play the same role as Jesus did in the flesh? I submit He does not replace Jesus in this way. And Jesus knew this very well. That is why He told His apostles that their job was to make disciples: They were to do in others' lives by their physical presence what He had done in theirs. It was a deliberate part of Jesus' plan to fulfill the Great Commission that those who were already disciples should invest themselves in others under His authority and through the power of His Spirit. Must not this life-to-life investment also become a crucial complement to our proclamation of sanctifying grace if we are to fully implement Jesus' strategy for making disciples of all nations?[\[12\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 86.

[\[2\]](#) A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 145.

[\[3\]](#) Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 268.

[\[4\]](#) G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 69.

[\[5\]](#) For failure to represent His holy name before the nations God brings judgment on Israel. Cf. Ezekiel 36:22–38. But note in the same passage also His promise of vindicating His holiness through the New Covenant.

[\[6\]](#) The present writer's contemporary, working definition of discipleship is a modification of that by Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), pp. 29–30: Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ, the purpose

being to aid and guide their growth in godliness/holy living and equip them to reproduce themselves and to use their spiritual gift(s) in the work of the ministry.

[7] On the process of discipleship in the Gospels several works are significant. The older classic by A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, was first published in 1871 and revised in 1899; it has been reprinted by Kregel in 1971. A more concise treatment of the same data is the well-written book by Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), and another more interpretative study by Carl Wilson is *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976). Cf. also John James Vincent, *Disciple and Lord: The Historical and Theological Significance of Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels* (Sheffield, England: Academy Press, 1976); Knox Chamblin "Following Jesus According to the New Testament," Columbia Theological Seminary, Th.M. thesis, 1967; Jerome L. Larson, "Biblical Discipleship: Its Questions and Answers," Master's Thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1975; Kent Tucker, "The Principles of Discipleship Used in Training the Twelve in the Gospel of Mark," Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1970; Gary Tangeman, "New Testament Principles of Discipleship," Master's Thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1975. Of these works only Coleman writes from within the Wesleyan tradition.

[8] Although the second half of the Commission certainly alludes to this, viz., "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The teaching/learning of obedience is certainly a part of the shaping of character in progressive sanctification. It should be noted, however, that this has reference to future disciples, not to the band of eleven.

[9] Cf., Jay Adams, *Godliness Through Discipline* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 4, 8–12. Adams recognizes the proper place of self-denial in discipline, and he speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in providing power for a disciplined life. His Reformed position, however, does not allow for the same dynamic role of the Spirit as Wesleyans do with their understanding of the connection between the infilling of the Spirit and entire sanctification.

[10] There are surprisingly few references in the literature on discipleship to equipping individuals for ministry according to their spiritual gift(s). Leroy Eims

devotes a paragraph to the subject in his *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 142; and Walter Henrichsen has a seven-page chapter on “Gifts and Calling” in *Disciples Are Made-Not Born* (Wheaton: Victor, 1975), pp. 131–38.

[11] Far too little attention has been given to the inter-relationship of sanctification and discipleship. For an introduction see Richard Taylor, *The Disciplined Life* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1962), pp. 48–62. A recent work by Jerry Bridges of the Navigators has some useful suggestions, but since Bridges does not write from the Wesleyan tradition, he misses the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit as well as the interaction between entire sanctification and discipleship. Cf. Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1978).

[12] A number of recent works deal with the process of making disciples in a contemporary setting. The best of these is Allen Hadidian’s *Successful Discipling*, but several others provide some very helpful insights on the “how to” of the discipleship process. Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* and Gary W. Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Followup* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) are particularly useful. Cf. also Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Discipleship Training* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made-Not Born*, Doug Hartman and Doug Sutherland, *A Guidebook to Discipleship* (Irvine, California: Harvest House, 1976); Gen Warr, *You Can Make Disciples* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1978). Two works specifically relate to the discipleship of women: Carole Mayhall, *From the Heart of a Woman: Basic Discipleship from a Woman’s Viewpoint* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1976), And Anne Ortlund, *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1977). Unfortunately, none of these authors write from a Wesleyan perspective, and therefore, the dynamic impact the Wesleyan-Arminian theological position ought to have upon the strategy for making disciples does not receive the attention it deserves. It should be noted, however, that the Free Methodists have developed a manual on this subject for use by local churches entitled *Decision to Discipleship* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Men International, 1977).