

Liberty University

Reflection Paper I

A Paper Submitted to

Submitted to Dr. Jonathan Geukgeuzian,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

Biblical and Philosophical Foundations of Discipleship

DSMN 810 – B01

by

Curtis Boozer

May 24, 2020

Contents

Fifty Commands from Jesus	3
Stages of Discipleship.....	5
What are the three stages of following Jesus?	5
What stage are you currently in?	5
How did you come to accept Jesus?	5
How have you grown since that time?	6
Who are you helping to know and grow in Christ?	6
Comparison of Jesus' and Paul's Discipleship Methods	6
How "Laypeople and the Mission of God" could be implemented	7
Bibliography	10

Fifty Commands from Jesus

Matthew Payne has presented an article where he advances fifty commands that Jesus gives to believers in the gospels. These commands cover a broad range of situations and give actionable items that can be implemented to bless others, gain wisdom or guidance from the Lord, and to demonstrate love to the Creator. Upon reflection, two of these commands have presented on-going challenges to me.

Luke 6:46 and Matt 7:21,¹ convey that the idea that Payne defines as “Don’t call Jesus Lord when you don’t obey Him.”² Luke 6:46 says, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” This relatively straightforward command is one that comes into direct conflict with my willful sin nature. I am committed to Jesus as my Lord and Savior, yet I find that I seem to be in a continual state of rebellion as a default stance. If I am not diligent and mindful of my thoughts and actions, I can find myself living as a selfish person who seeks comfort rather than purpose.

By seeking a relationship with Jesus and spending time in communion with Him, I am better able to resist the temptation to pursue my agenda. I have found that if I relax my disciplines, I will quickly find myself moving away from the precepts that I am sure are best for me and life-giving to others. Mikhail Gorbachev is credited with saying, “If you are not moving forward, you are moving backward.” This sentiment describes how I feel if I become complacent and begin to stop giving diligent effort in my spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, meditation upon God’s Word, and time spent listening to God for direction.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

² Matthew Robert Payne, “The Fifty Commands of Jesus,” (*Ezine @rticles*. February 26, 2007), Accessed on May 20, 2020 at <https://ezinearticles.com/?The-Fifty-Commands-of-Jesus&id=468177>.

Matt 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” This passage reminds me that God does know my motivations and considers the honesty of my efforts to obey Him. It is not good enough for me to tell others how to follow God’s Word and follow His commands and then chose to live a life that is not consistent with what I have directed others to follow. God will not be dishonored by such behavior, and I have to be aware that being a disciple requires adherence to His directives as I am motivated by my love for Him.

The second command that I am challenged by from Payne’s list is described as “Build on the rock of obedience to Jesus; otherwise, you will fall,”³ which is supported by the verses found in Matt 7:24-27 and Luke 6:47-49. These two passages describe a man who chooses a wise decision-making path as he relies upon Jesus’ words and a foolish man who ignores what Jesus says, and his decisions lead to significant failures. I find that my pride and laziness can lead to my reliance upon conventional secular wisdom rather than the precepts that Jesus has shared for His disciples to follow. Jesus’ ways are often not what humankind considers to be the best strategies for success. I find myself struggling with directives that encourage me to “love my enemies” or to “judge not so that you may not be judged” or to “forgive others.” I have experienced how these commands bless my life, but it is easy to rely upon cultural training and move aggressively against others to protect my turf or enact revenge for injuries sustained. I have to allow the Holy Spirit to speak truth to me through God’s Word to remind me of God’s ways, which are practical and powerful.

³ Matthew Payne, “The Fifty Commands of Jesus.”

Stages of Discipleship

Earley and Dempsey describe three stages of discipleship in the life of a believer.⁴

Stage One: Declaration (Investigation Leading to Repentance and Faith in Jesus)

Stage Two: Development (Immersion, Abandonment, and Apprenticeship into Ministry)

Stage Three: Deployment (Intentional Global Commissioning)

What are the three stages of following Jesus?

According to Early and Dempsey, declaration, development, and deployment are the three stages of discipleship for believers in Jesus Christ.⁵

What stage are you currently in?

I would content that individuals remain in a state of development for their entire lives. Sanctification is a lifelong process, and the Holy Spirit is always at work. I am active in the deployment state as I have left my home and extended family as God directs and serve among a people and region that is much different from where I grew up. My on-going challenge is to work to support the church where I have been assigned and to share the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ with others and then to work to equip and inspire them to become disciple-making disciples as well.

How did you come to accept Jesus?

My parents attended Baptist churches during my early childhood, so I was always in the fellowship of the church. At the age of seven, I realized that I was a sinner and in need of a savior. I confessed my sins and prayed for Jesus to become my Lord with our Pastor. He

⁴ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . .*, (B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Kindle Edition, p. 66.

⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

questioned me and ascertained that I was aware of my condition and was ready to make such a serious decision.

How have you grown since that time?

Much of my journey has been supported by the Holy Spirit, as there were few mentors along the way. I did have peers who impacted my life and encouraged me along the way as well as pastors, whose teaching I internalized and contemplated.

Who are you helping to know and grow in Christ?

Part of my current duties encompasses the development of a Bible college for our church. We have around eighty students that are working through our curriculum that will enable them to attain associate and bachelor's degrees in theology. These programs focus on gaining knowledge from reading excellent books on theological subjects and engaging in writings and discussion boards to describe how these concepts apply to their lives. Our vision is to have three thousand students in our college annually.

Also, I lead small groups where I share how Scripture has applied to my life and encourage group members to pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus, as well as developing community among ourselves so that we can support each other as we journey through life.

I have one individual that I am engaging in a one-on-one discipleship relationship that is focused primarily on developing a close relationship with Jesus.

Comparison of Jesus' and Paul's Discipleship Methods

It is essential to consider how Jesus disciplined those that became apostles and how the Apostle Paul invested in those to whom he came in contact. Deffinbaugh proposes that Jesus was preparing His followers to become apostles, which is a different goal than preparing

believers to become disciples. Deffinbaugh considers that the apostles had a unique challenge compared to a modern-day disciple. Deffinbaugh said, “It was their task to lay down the terms of salvation. It was their calling to lay down the foundation for the church.”⁶

The writer continues his argument by proposing that Paul was not discipling Timothy in their conversations, but was providing specific coaching on how to minister as a spiritual leader. Deffinbaugh seeks to make a distinction that discipleship should not be regarded as a practice that calls people to leave their secular occupations and work in full-time ministry. He concludes that discipleship is the collective responsibility of the church, all of the believers using their gifts to invest into new believers and prepare them to be effective in ministry as they move forward in their lives.⁷ The idea that one discipliner is sufficient to provide all that a new disciple would need is presented as being outside of the example that Jesus and Paul provided.

How “Laypeople and the Mission of God” could be implemented

Stetzer’s premise is that the current church model that is broadly used in the American church emphasizes the importance of the paid clergy and devalues the role of the laity.⁸ In the years that this practice has been followed, the laity has increasingly become less involved in sharing their faith, and the overall vitality of churches has decreased. Stetzer encourages the thought that all believers are priests in God’s service and that the term laity should be discontinued. Simply discontinuing using a term would not solve this problem, but actively

⁶ Bob Deffinbaugh, “What Happened to Discipleship in the Epistles?,” *Bible.org*, June 2, 2004, Accessed May 20, 2020 from <https://bible.org/seriespage/18-what-happened-discipleship-epistles>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God, part 1 – Killing the Clergy-Laity Caste System,” *Christianity Today*, July 17, 2012, Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/july/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-1--killing-clergy.html>.

promoting the importance of each believer's contribution could be supported by changing the nomenclature used to describe church members.

If our leaders were to embrace this idea, we would continually speak of the challenge each person has as a priest in God's court. Our pastors would remind people of our role in serving them, equipping them, and encouraging them toward the ministry that God has prepared for them to accomplish. We would also change our metrics to define what an active priest looks like and tabulate the numbers that we currently have and set goals to see more of people with these attributes in the future. This metric would drive our behaviors and allow us to set up systems of support that help people reach that goal. This concept is consistent with Stetzer's encouragement to include affirmation and assessment when making the culture change needed to move the non-staff priests to the forefront of ministry.⁹

Our leadership still views the value of gathering together each week to evangelize those who are seeking God, worship together, equip each other, and inspire each other. We have already taken steps that align with Stetzer's thoughts. In recent weeks, we authorized our people to hold baptisms in any body of water they had accessible (swimming pools, ponds, lakes, and the ocean), without having a member of the clergy in attendance. We provided training via video and asked that they video the baptisms so that we could share in the celebration. We also have been encouraging people to share their faith with others, simply because they have access to people that the "pastors" may never meet. Our goal has been to raise their awareness of the position they have as a child of God and the authority which comes with that position.

⁹ Ed Stetzer, "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part VI – Two Final Essentials: Affirmation and Assessment," *Christianity Today*, November 26, 2012, Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-vi--two-final.html>.

The church should be run with good order and the leadership positions that the pastors on staff hold are essential for coordination and spiritual direction. The fundamental goal that we are attempting to convey is that we are to encourage our people to do ministry and to feel empowered by the paid staff to do so, rather than withholding ministry access from them.

Bibliography

- Deffinbaugh, Bob. "What Happened to Discipleship in the Epistles?" *Bible.org*, June 2, 2004. Accessed May 20, 2020 from <https://bible.org/seriespage/18-what-happened-discipleship-epistles>.
- Earley, Dave and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is . . .* Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013. Kindle Edition.
- Payne, Matthew Payne. "The Fifty Commands of Jesus." *Ezine @rticles*. February 26, 2007. <https://ezinearticles.com/?The-Fifty-Commands-of-Jesus&id=468177>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part 1 – Killing the Clergy-Laity Caste System." *Christianity Today*, July 17, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/july/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-1--killing-clergy.html>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part II – Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers." *Christianity Today*, August 7, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/august/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-ii--reclaiming.html>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part III – Customers to Owners." *Christianity Today*, October 22, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/october/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-iii--customers-to-owners.html>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part IV – Changing the Culture of Expectation in Your Church." *Christianity Today*, October 29, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/october/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-iv-changing-culture-of.html>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part V – Essentials to Changing the Culture." *Christianity Today*, November 5, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-v--essentials-to.html>.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, part VI – Two Final Essentials: Affirmation and Assessment." *Christianity Today*, November 26, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2020 from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-vi--two-final.html>.