



CHAPTER 6

Improper Training

If the Church is failing to produce mature, Christ-like disciples, it is not because the Gospel is weak, the Holy Spirit is absent, or God is withholding power. The failure rests almost entirely on how we train. Or more accurately—how we do not train.

This stronghold is subtle but devastating. It is not rooted in rebellion, but in misguided assumptions about how spiritual growth works. It is the belief—never spoken, rarely examined—that sermons and programs are enough to form disciples.

They are not. They never have been. And they never will be.

We do not have a lack of desire for maturity.

We have a lack of biblical training.

The Modern Church Has Replaced Training With Teaching

The early Church did not just “teach” discipleship. They trained disciples.

Jesus did not lecture the Twelve; He formed them. The Apostles did not preside over services; they equipped people.

The modern Church has exchanged a hands-on apprenticeship model for a classroom model.

We have:

- sermons instead of skills,
- lessons instead of lifestyle,
- information instead of impartation,
- doctrines instead of discipline,
- knowledge instead of transformation.

Teaching is essential—but by itself, it produces listeners, not doers.

James warned us:

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

—James 1:22

When discipleship is reduced to hearing, deception sets in. People believe they are mature because they know something—not because they can do something.

Sermons Alone Cannot Produce Disciples

This may shock some pastors, but it must be said plainly:

Sermons alone were never designed to produce mature disciples, and when relied upon as the primary method, they reach their natural limit.

If they could, America would be the most spiritually mature nation on earth. We have more sermons, more podcasts, more livestreams, more conferences, and more teaching than the entire history of Christianity combined.

And yet:

- immorality is rising,
- biblical illiteracy is astounding,
- spiritual gifts are nearly absent,
- most Christians cannot hear God’s voice,
- few know how to pray effectively,

- fewer know how to evangelize,
- and few can lead someone to Christ.

This is not a result of laziness. It is the predictable result of a system built on listening instead of doing.

A sermon can inspire.

A sermon can convict.

A sermon can illuminate.

But a sermon cannot transform. Transformation requires training.

Jesus Did Not Build a Classroom—He Built a Training School

Look at the methods of Jesus:

- He walked with His disciples daily.
- He demonstrated the Kingdom.
- He explained what He did.
- He sent them out to do it.
- He corrected them.
- He repeated the cycle.
- He expected growth.
- He required obedience.

The early Church followed the same model.

This is why even an ordinary disciple like Ananias: (Book of Acts Chapters 9 and 22)

- heard the voice of God clearly,
- received visions,
- operated in the gifts,
- healed the sick,
- baptized new believers,
- prophesied,
- and walked in holiness.

Ananias was not an apostle. Not a prophet. Not an elder. Not clergy.

He was a disciple.

Which raises a painful but necessary question:

Why are most modern pastors not as spiritually equipped as Ananias was?

It is not a lack of calling.

It is not a lack of sincerity.

It is not a lack of desire.

It is a lack of biblical training.

Pastors Have Not Been Trained to Make Disciples

I speak this gently but firmly:

Most pastors have been trained to:

- prepare sermons,
- run meetings,
- administer programs,
- counsel families,
- officiate ceremonies,
- manage budgets,
- and maintain church structures.

These are useful skills—but they are not disciple-making skills.

No pastor can train someone in gifts, hearing God, deliverance, healing, or spiritual authority if they themselves have never been trained in these things, or think they are only for clergy and not every disciple.

You Cannot Lead People Where You Yourself Have Not Gone

I was invited by a bishop of a major denomination to teach their pastors about discipleship. They were all Lead pastors and had earned seminary MDiv. or Doctoral degrees. After showing them the Bible definition of a mature disciple, they

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had a refreshingly honest response. They said: "We are not disciples ourselves... so how can we make one?"

Here is the painful truth:

Leaders cannot produce mature disciples when they themselves were never disciplined into maturity.

This is not an accusation—it is a reality produced by centuries of drift.

Bible colleges taught us to: - prepare sermons, - manage church operations, - counsel, - officiate ceremonies.

But who taught us to:

- hear the voice of God with accuracy?
- operate confidently in the gifts?
- cast out demons?
- disciple others into holiness?
- impart the anointing?
- train believers like Jesus trained the Twelve?

We inherited a clergy system, not a discipleship system.

And what we are trained in, we reproduce. We teach the same classes and give the same type of training we had in Bible Colleges and Seminaries

You cannot impart what you do not possess. You cannot reproduce what you have not become.

This is not condemnation—it is reality.

Pastors today are victims of an unbiblical system that trained them to prepare sermons and run churches, not build disciples.

The Early Church Training System Was Completely Different

The early Church used a training model built on:

- daily engagement,
- spiritual apprenticeship,
- imitation,
- correction,
- impartation,
- activation,
- team leadership,
- and hands-on practice.

Paul said:

**“The things you have heard and seen in me,
DO.”**

—Philippians 4:9

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He did not simply teach—they watched him, imitated him, and practiced until they could reproduce the works of Christ.

This is why Paul could say:

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

—1 Corinthians 11:1

You cannot imitate a sermon.

You can only imitate a life.

Our Current Methods Do Not Equip

Imagine a medical school that: - never allowed students to touch a patient, - never let them practice a procedure, - never required rounds, - never permitted hands-on experience.

How confident would they be? Would they feel equipped to practice medicine? Would they even try?

Then why do we expect believers to:

- heal the sick,
- cast out demons,
- prophesy,
- hear God’s voice,
- and overcome sin,

when they have never been trained to do so?

We have created a church full of:

- inspired spectators,
- emotionally stirred listeners,
- but spiritually powerless disciples.

This is not because the people refuse to grow. It is because the system refuses to train them.

A Sad but True Story

Some years ago, I was invited to speak at a local church. I preached a message about how every believer should be trained to function like the disciple Ananias. How they should be confident to heal people by the laying on of hands, (like the disciple Ananias did Paul) To hear from God and prophecy like he did. To give people a word of knowledge like the disciple Ananias did, and baptize people like he did. At the end of the service, God moved hearts supernaturally. It was like it was the day after Pearl Harbor, when everyone lined up to enlist in the military. People were laying down their lives, begging to be trained and equipped to serve God.

At the end of the service, I asked those who enlisted for training to fill out a card with their contact information. I told them the pastor would be calling them to set up a training plan. I was so

happy to lay hundreds of these cards on the Senior pastors' desk before I left town.

After a few weeks, I started getting calls from the people. "When is the pastor going to call me?" they said. "When are we going to start training?" others said. After a few months I called the pastor to ask how the training was going. "It just seemed like too much work" he told me. The cards sat on his desk and nothing was ever done.

I was very upset at first, but after sometime I realized he was right. Too much work for the Senior pastor model. Too much for the old wineskin to contain. We need a new wineskin. It will take five-fold ministers working together to train God's people.

Biblical Discipleship Requires Three Things Modern Churches Can't Provide

1. Five-fold impartation.

Disciples must be exposed to all of the offices in a balanced way. People must be taught subjects that are tailored for them individually.

2. Demonstration (Modeling)

Jesus modeled everything He taught.

3. Activation (Practice)

He sent the disciples out to do what they learned.

The Stronghold Must Fall

Improper training is not a small weakness—it is a catastrophic stronghold that prevents the Church from fulfilling her purpose.

We must replace:

- weekly services with practical training,
- sermons with impartation,
- programs with apprenticeship,
- monologue with hands-on practice,
- spectatorship with participation.

The bride Christ is returning for will not be formed only in classrooms. She will be formed in training grounds.

The next chapter will address another major barrier to maturity: the way the Church divides believers by age—and how this division destroyed generational discipleship.