

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.2, January 8, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

The following article is the first chapter from a booklet titled, True Discipleship. I have made a few additional comments. ALL ADDITIONS are enclosed in **[BRACKETS]**. The only other change is that for EMPHASIS I have **capitalized some** words, phrases and/or sentences or **underlined them**.

True Discipleship - by William MacDonald

Foreword: This booklet is an attempt to set forth some principles of New Testament discipleship. Some of us have seen these principles in the Word for years, but somehow concluded that they were too extreme and impractical for the complicated age in which we live. And so we surrendered to the chill of our spiritual environment. Then we met a group of young believers who set out to demonstrate that the Savior's terms of discipleship are not only highly practical but that they are the only terms which will ever result in the evangelization of the world. We acknowledge our indebtedness to these young people for providing living examples of many of the truths set forth here. To the extent that these truths are still beyond our own personal experience, we set forth as the aspirations of our heart. —William MacDonald

Introduction: The pathway to true discipleship **begins when a person is born again**. It begins when the following events take place:

- 1. When** a person realizes that he is sinful, lost, blind and naked before God.
- 2. When** he acknowledges that he cannot save himself by good character or good works.
- 3. When** he believes that the Lord Jesus Christ died as his Substitute on the Cross.
- 4. When** by a definite decision of faith, he acknowledges Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior.

This is how a person becomes a Christian. It is important to emphasize this at the outset. Too many people think that you become a Christian by living a Christian life.

NOT at all! **You must first become a Christian before you can live the Christian life.**

The life of discipleship outlined in the following pages is a supernatural life. We do not have the power in ourselves to live it. We need divine power. **Only when we are born again** do we receive the strength to live as Jesus taught. Before reading any further, ask yourself the question, **“Have I ever been born again? Have I become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus?”**

[Added NOTES: It is the GRACIOUS work of the Holy Spirit who convicts the sinner of sin and quickens the sinner with new birth/new life/regeneration— leading to repentance and faith. (John 16:8-11; Ephesians 2:1-10)

BECAUSE the Holy Spirit will first of all convict the sinner of sin, of their ‘good works’ being but filthy rags, and that the judgment of Holy God awaits them, (John 16:8-11)—**CHRISTIANS, LET US LABOR TO GET SINNERS UNDER THE SOUND OF THE GOSPEL, read or preached!** For the Gospel IS the power of God unto salvation! (Romans 1:16) Understanding the terror of the LORD— persuade men! (2 Cor. 5:11) It pleases God to save the lost via the means of the foolishness of preaching! (1 Cor. 1:21; Acts 2 - 8:4)

AS TO THOSE already saved: All genuine Christians are at various stages in discipleship. There will always be room for more growth in grace. BUT THERE IS NO such reality as a heaven bound Christian who IS NOT a disciple, a follower, of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple, A FOLLOWER of Jesus Christ IS NOT some sort of OPTION. When a person is born again they not only have their sins forgiven and their eternal destiny changed—they immediately become a new creation: **Ephesians 2:1-10; Acts 2:37-47; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21!**

If you have not, receive Him now as your Lord and Savior. Then determine to obey Him in all that He has commanded, whatever the cost may be. —William MacDonald

The Terms of Discipleship: True Christianity is an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Savior is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him—or their weekends—or their years of retirement.** Rather He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives. “He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them”¹ — H. A. Evan Hopkins.

Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all.

The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples—demands that are all but overlooked in this day of luxury living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be.

We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons. We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for political reasons. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp.

And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough. **There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Savior of the world:**

1. A Supreme Love for Jesus Christ.

“If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, **but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison.** Actually, the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is one of the stubbornest hindrances to discipleship. Not until we are willing to lay down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us.

2. A Denial of Self.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matthew 16:24). Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. **It means that self abdicates the throne.** It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.”

**“My glorious Victor, Prince Divine, Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine,
At length my will is all thine own, Glad vassals of a Savior’s throne.”** - H. G. C. Moule

3. A Deliberate Choosing of the Cross.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross...” (Matthew 16:24). The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonor and reproach”—C. A. Coates. The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon

the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

[ADDED NOTE: Yes, we can try to be a 'Jonah, a Sampson or a Lot'— but not without SERIOUS consequence!! In contrast, multitudes are in churches today who still love the world (1 John 2:15); and many are without chastening consequences. How can this be? **God only chastens His own! (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:5-8)]**

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and of devotion (Galatians 5:22, 23). **In order to be His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).**

[ADDED NOTE: MUST! MUST? YES! YES! As a born again Christian a DIVINE ‘MUST’ is laid upon me! How so? There is the INDWELLING COMPELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT leading, motivating, empowering. The redeemed heart is FLOODED with the love of God! (Romans 5:5) We LOVE JESUS because He first loved us! **Yes, sometimes we fail badly.** And when we do, we are of all humans most miserable... thus, we are called to repentance and restoration of fellowship; and if we refuse— chastening will be coming! Why? Because Jesus loves His redeemed ones so much He will bring us back!]

5. A Fervent Love for all Who Belong to Christ.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). This is the love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

6. An Unswerving Continuance in His Word.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31). For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

“Keep me from turning back. The handles of my plough with tears are wet, The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet, My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.”

[ADDED NOTE: Because Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith— saving faith is enduring faith! HOWEVER, there are MANY whom the Father did not plant and there are MANY anti-christs! **(Matt. 15:12-14; 1 John 2:8-9)**]

7. A Forsaking of All to Follow Him.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ’s terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. **Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples drink it down eagerly, assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying.**

What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one’s material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel. The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself.

But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil’s hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord’s injunction against laying up treasure on earth. **In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.**

These then are the seven terms of Christian discipleship. They are clear and unequivocal.

The writer realizes that in the act of setting them forth, he has condemned himself as an unprofitable servant. But shall the truth of God be forever suppressed because of the failure of God’s people?

Is it not true that the message is always greater than the messenger? Is it not proper that God be true and every man a liar? Should we not say with an old worthy, “Thy will be done though in my own undoing.” **Confessing our past failure, let us courageously face up to the claims of Christ upon us and seek henceforth to be true disciples of our glorious Lord.**

“My Master, lead me to Thy door: Pierce this now willing ear once more, Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay with thee to toil, endure, obey.” - H. G. C. Moule

(<http://plymouthbrethren.wordpress.com/2007/01/06/true-discipleship-william-macdonald/>)

[RESPONSE]— May these words become the prayer of each of our hearts:

“My glorious Victor, Prince Divine, Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine,
At length my will is all Thine own, Glad vassals of a Savior’s throne.

My Master, lead me to Thy door: Pierce this now willing ear once more,
Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay with thee to toil, endure, obey.”

- H. G. C. Moule

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

**1. Ladies Bible Study— ‘LORD, HEAL MY HURTS!’— Tuesdays @ 10:30AM!
Call the church to reserve your book— 615-452-5951**

**2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm
@ Adam and Bethany’s home.**

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH VISITATION

4. EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men’s Fellowship and Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for January 13, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School / 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children’s Church

3. Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal / 4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service

Sunday Schedule for January 20, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School / 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children’s Church

3. Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal

4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service {LORD’S SUPPER SERVICE, 1:00PM}

Sunday Schedule for January 27, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School / 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children’s Church

3. Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal / 4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service

IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US—

1. **WHEN** as families we are seeking to MEMORIZE Scripture; **WHEN** as families we are singing HYMNS; **WHEN** as families and as individuals, we are reading the Word of God ... DAILY! SO THAT as a CHURCH FAMILY **WHEN we gather** for OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL, WORSHIP SERVICE, EARLY AFTERNOON SERVICE-

a. THAT families and individuals recite memorized Scriptures; b. And/or read Scriptures they are learning; c. And join together in a time of wonderful HYMN SINGING and SCRIPTURE SONG SINGING! → **ALL AS AN OVER FLOW OF EVERY DAY CHURCH AT YOUR HOUSE!**

VI. IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US— WHEN As families, our homes are used as MISSION STATIONS... OR LIGHT HOUSES!

VII. IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US— WHEN SOUTHWEST FAMILIES GIVE A NIGHT TO JESUS,

1, 2, 3 TIMES A MONTH for ministry in our mission field of Gallatin/Sumner County!!??

QUESTION: Is MY HOME / YOUR HOME a “Mission Station”... a “Lighthouse”... where and from whence you/we

(1) WORSHIP God, (2) Seek to BUILD UP SAINTS, and

(3) Evangelize the lost? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

VIII. IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US— WHEN AS A CHURCH FAMILY TOGETHER we purposely bring GOD IN THE MIDST of our Personal, Marriage, Family, Church, Neighborhood and Workplace relationships, as well as to worldwide mission fields!

IX. IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US— If we prayed and worked together in A VISION to Upgrade our Sunday School ministry?

“Some folk don’t know what’s happening.

Some folk don’t care what’s happening.

Some folk pray labor together to make things happen! — which am I, which are you?

X. IMAGINE WHAT GOD WILL DO THROUGH US— WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE utilized the **Awesome Power of Positive Testimonies!**

The Psalmist said, *“Come ye and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.”* (Psalm 66:16)

The early disciples of Jesus said, *“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”* (Acts 4:20)

The Woman at the Well, after her saving encounter with Jesus Christ, went into her town proclaiming, "***Come, see a man who told me all the things I ever did...!***" (John 4:29)

God-honoring testimonies are powerful instruments in the hands of God to,

- (1) Encourage our own hearts,
- (2) Lift up the spirits of other saints, and
- (3) Bring others to Christ! (**Psalm 40:1-3; Psalm 51:12-15!**)

Truly one of the most effective tools God has given us for encouragement and for seeing the Kingdom of God built up is the power of a godly, positive testimony!

Grace to one and all! James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org