

DISCIPLESHIP & THE CHURCH

1

“Recalling, Reclaiming, and Renewing in Christ” - Acts 13:42-52

ABCOTS Annual Session

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October 12, 2018

Recalling Discipleship

2

- The entire basis of the Divine-Human relationship is rooted in the call to discipleship.
- The disciple is a follower and everybody is a disciple of somebody!
- Discipleship is a commitment to a person, and not just a way of life.
- Discipleship involves a complete change in the priorities of an individual.
- Ours is not a call to Church membership, but a call to Kingdom significance!

Recalling The Types of Discipleship

3

- Nontransformational - Discipleship apart from Jesus.
- Transformational - Discipleship centered on Christ, thus producing heart changes in people.
- IMPORTANT NOTE:
“Not all discipleship is transformational, but transformation only comes through the discipleship that is centered on Christ.” (Transformational Discipleship, Geiger, Kelly, Nation, pg.10)

Reclaiming Our Discipleship Call

4

- The disciple must address all conflicting situations that arise to challenge demands of discipleship. This is not a “hate” scenario but rather a “refusal-to-compromise” scenario.
- Discipleship requires a willingness to sacrifice in order to complete the process with which we have been called.
- Understanding the fundamental reason for the existence of the Church!

Reclaiming Discipleship By Addressing The Dilemma

5

- There is a discipleship deficiency in most churches due to a lack of transformation.
- The essence of discipleship is transformational, not informational because information does not promote behavior modification. *Knowledge makes us more accountable, not necessarily more productive.*
- Churches that are transformational in discipleship help people encounter Jesus as Lord.

Addressing The Dilemma (cont.)

6

- Jesus never rebuked persons for their knowledge but He did rebuke them for their lack of repentance based upon their knowledge.
- Ministries that approach discipleship as merely information and not repentance devalues discipleship and denies the power of the Gospel. This approach perpetuates what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls “cheap grace”.
- “Grace we bestow on ourselves; preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession..... Grace without discipleship, without the cross, without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate” (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*)

Renewing Discipleship In The Church

7

- The responsibility of the Church is to provide intentional opportunities for transformation to occur. Spiritual transformation is achieved through the *partnership* between God & man and people must be reminded of their personal responsibility for obedience.
- Church leadership must help persons see their created purpose through the lens of:
 - **Gospel** (sufficient for justification AND sanctification)
 - **Discipline** (believers being challenged by Scripture to pursue God)
 - **New identity** (embracing the TRUTH about who believers have become)

Renewing Discipleship (cont.)

8

- As Church leaders, if we fail to interpret discipleship through all three lenses (Gospel, Discipline, New Identity), then our congregations will not see the totality of transformation.
- Vibrant and healthy churches are utterly and completely reliant on the Holy Spirit.
- Theology, or the reasoning about God, must be an activity persons devoted to God participate in. People must struggle theologically with what it means to be a believer.