

DISCIPLESHIP
LESSON EIGHT: IDENTIFYING MYSELF WITH
CHRIST – THE CHURCH AND MY PLACE IN IT

INTRODUCTION: There are many Christians who say they love Jesus, but who have little to do with His Church. For some, their failure not to unite with the Church is because of laziness or hypocrisy. For others, it is a lack of spiritual maturity or discipleship. If you are going to be true disciple of Christ, you will identify yourself with Him by loving the Church and taking an active part in it.

This is what He demands of us. Why? Because the Church is His *body*. It is not reasonable to say that you love Jesus and at the same time shoe despise for His body. If you love Jesus, you will also love His Church.

I. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The primary reason that a disciple needs to have an active part in the Church is to carry out the mandate that our Divine Teacher gave us. In MATTHEW 28:19-20 we find that Jesus ordered His Church to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing those who believe and teaching them to keep His commandments.

As you take a look at this task, you might ask the question: What one individual could accomplish this? The answer is: NO ONE INDIVIDUAL. But, that should not surprise you, because the task has not been given to any one individual. Not even Jesus attempted to tell the gospel to everyone by Himself. That was not His plan. The task of discipling the nations is mission of the entire Church.

Some have placed a limit on these words in MATTHEW claiming that they were directed to the Apostles and that they were not intended for the Church as a whole. But, if we consider the last words of the chapter, we will find Jesus saying, "...and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The "end of the age" means to *the end of the world*. Therefore, if this mandate was given only to the apostles, and not to the Church as a whole, the apostles must be physically alive and well, somewhere on this planet. We know that this is not this case. Jesus gave this mission to His Church, which at that time, was made up of only the twelve apostles.

Jesus promised a unique power to His Church. The Church of Jesus Christ is the only organization in whole world with the capability to achieve the task of discipling "all the nations." Why? Because Jesus promised to be with His Church until the end of all time. So great was the power Jesus gave to Church, that even the "gates of hell cannot prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus did not promise this power to

any one individual, but He did to His "Church." So, if you want to be able to carry out the mission the Lord left us, we will have to be actively involved with his Church.

II. AS YOU PRACTICE THE FORMULA, GOD WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR PLACE OF SERVICE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27 teaches us that just like our physical bodies, the body of Christ is made up of many "members." Each member has it's own function or job to do inside the body. Your big toe could never take the place of your eye no matter how hard it tried, because it does not have the capacity to see. Your eye could not take the place of your big toe because it was not designed to support the weight of your body. Every body member has it's own little job to take care of.

There are many Christians are sit around and patiently wait for a revelation from God concerning their place of service in the Church. Unfortunately, they are going to be waiting for a long time. No one has the right to sit around and wait for God to show them His will for their life. God is not going to show you big things if you are not going to be faithful in small things. To be involved in the mission of the Church means to set out to accomplish what you already know He wants you to do, and then allow Him to lead you into your place of ministry in the body. And the way He will do that is through Bible Study, Prayer, Fellowship, and Witnessing.

As we study the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will indicate to you the changes necessary to prepare you for your place of service. He will instruct you in the things you need to know, will give you the special training you need, and will get you ready for your special place of service in the body of Christ.

As you practice prayer, you will learn to intercede for others. You will come to a place in your prayer life where you will find yourself praying for certain people and their special situations. As you continue to pray, the Holy Spirit will show you ways we can meet peoples' needs. In this way, he will plant in your heart a special place of service where He wants you to carry out His will.

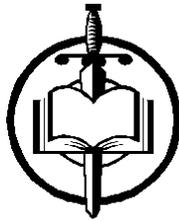
As you practice fellowship with other believers, you will soon find yourself relating to a certain group of people of particular ages groups or special needs. You will feel something special for that group of people. You will see their needs and want to do something about them. The Holy Spirit will guide you and help you accomplish that task.

The last ingredient in the formula is Witnessing. In reality, if you are being responsible with the other three ingredients of the formula, this one will not be difficult to carry out, because your testimony will be such that the people of this world will see a difference between your life and theirs, and will desire to have

what you have. This will lead you to the opportunities of sharing Christ with them.

CONCLUSION: The Apostle Paul in EPHESIANS 5:23-27 taught us that the Church has a very special place in Jesus' heart. So special is the relationship between Christ and His Church that it was compared to the relationship between a husband and wife. So special is the church to Jesus, that He gave His life to rescue it.

As a disciple of Christ, it would be impossible for you to follow Jesus and, at the same time, not desire to have anything to do with His Church. To criticize, misuse, abuse, or neglect the Church would be a huge mistake for your life. It would be as though you were criticizing, misusing, or abusing Jesus. The true disciple will identify with Christ by being faithful to His Church.



SPIRITUAL NOTEBOOK

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Matthew 16:18...Who edifies the Church? How does this verse show that the church is a moving organization, and not one that sits still?

2. Hebrews 10:24-25...What two things should we be stimulated to do? What does verse 25 say about those who do not want to attend church? Why do you think we need to get together?

3. James 1:22-25...What is the person who only hears the word - but does not practice it - doing to themselves? Are you a hearer or a do-er?

4. Ephesians 4:11-16...What is the function of Pastors and Teachers in the Church? What are the two reasons for "perfecting the saints"? What does verse 16 have to do with you?

5. REVIEW: Go over your Scripture studies this week and write down what you learned from them.

PRAYER: Write down the person or things for which you prayed for today.

FELLOWSHIP: Write down the name of the believer you had fellowship with and what you did.

WITNESSING: Write down the name of the non-believer you witnessed to and how you did it.

Baptist Church Centro of Life
DISCIPLESHIP, by Pastor Ricardo Róbinson.