

A Disciple's Handbook

By - Charles Pinkney

FELLOWSHIP
the body in union

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*Every Believer Becomes a Disciple -
Matthew 28:19*

**DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT PARTAKING OF THE LIFE OF GOD
AND THE MINISTRY OF Yeshua (JESUS)**

KOINONIA:

SHARING, COMMUNICATING, AND PARTAKING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to both know him and follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. During the Lord's earthly ministry, they walked at his side, conversed with him, and were both witnesses and **partakers** of his ministry. They knew his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. On a strictly physical level they *knew* him! Yet, this was not considered adequate. These original disciples were instructed to receive a further supernatural empowerment. In order to demonstrate and build the Kingdom of God there were told to. "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from above- -." Today I suspect that far too few nominal Christians are able to say they know him on a Spiritual level. Yes they know about him have been taught doctrines but how much do they know him in the transformative power of his love and the power of his resurrection?*

Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only **may know him**, but have fellowship with him **and partake** in his divine nature and *in his ministry*. When we gather as believers at any particular place of meeting can we say as we leave that meeting knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or have been empowered by his touch?" *1 Peter 4:10,11* defines God's idea of the importance of sharing the gift that is unique to each believer for indeed each has received a gift or many gifts to be shared from his or her life. Tradition has had the negative effect of barring or at least, discouraging the ordinary believer from ministry even though apostolic scripture consistently prohibits this.

All believers are told to grow and mature in the knowledge of Him who came to give more abundant life through the power of his resurrection. We are not to remain a novice and a baby in the faith, but that we attain "unto the stature of a 'mature man' even the stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4). The exaltation of a single voice in the role of authority **to disciple** us may be limited and limiting. Pulpit ministry is an unfortunate self-perpetuating legacy of 17 centuries of the "Church" age. Those who in fact have experience in Christ's life and ministry, made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit have a title in the Word of God; these individuals are called "**elders**." Certainly church denominations use this same term within some context of their doctrines. But those who Jesus calls elders may differ from what religious traditions might label as elders. The apostle John, the disciple who Jesus loved, begins his letter by talking about Spiritual **experience** as the qualification (credentials) that we must look to and lean upon. He noted what he had seen, touched, looked upon, and handled in the Word of life. (*1John1:1*)*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of*

life, these things we declare unto you - -;

True fellowship is elusive and hard to achieve since religious traditions tends to separate rather than unite in our sense of belonging and feeling one accord. The wrong motives and wrong understandings create disharmony. Correction is occasionally necessary but in the right Spirit. For we are to have the same Spirit that is Christ's and *- say the same thing - ", seeking that there be no schisms, walls, or disharmony among us. * (1Cor. 1:10,11)

Ministry Transforms, Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

After conversion of individuals, discipling pertains to their subsequent edification and maturing as part of the body Christ. This need not be the formal sort of ministry experienced as the normal Saturday or Sunday fare in a church congregation. In the apostles day it was done in intimate and loving fellowship groups where individuals shared their testimonies of the transforming life of Christ and the acknowledgment of the revelation of the Word of Truth with fellow believers. We pass through various stages as we grow. Just as in the natural, we begin as babies, then children, the strong young 'men', then mature sages expressing the character and spiritual nature of Jesus Christ. So is it in the matter of Spiritual growth. The Bible shows how we each are called to *minister our individual Spiritual gifts to one another.* (Rom.12; 1Cor.12. 1 Cor. 14, and 1Pet 4:11)

The proper and best time to edify and grow with one another is when believers come together in koinonia (fellowship). When two or more true believers get together the natural result is to share their common salvation and to have "fellowship" to minister "edification" to each other. When these two or more gather, Jesus joins them and becomes a co-participant through the Holy Spirit! This fellowship process is not complicated, nor formal, it is not domination of one individual authority over another. It is not adversarial. Discipleship happens as we share the several gifts given to each believer. Koinonia is about participation, communication and sharing. As referenced in 1John 1:1-3, It begins with actual experiences given as a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection. It is about the revelation of Christ within each person and how he is living through our lives and doing his work through us. **Koinonia is about sharing what Christ has given to each believer and ministering that gift to others.**

According to the measure of God's grace, individuals have various of testimonies and experiences, some have more, some fewer. There may be some with musical gifts which enhance worship and some with less of that ability. Some may have verbal skills, some less. Some with practical kinds of skills, some not so much. Some may be working through personal tragedies or rejection, while others have already had healing in these areas. All need to be encouraged to participate at some level so that **leadership skills** may be fostered in each.

The dynamics of fellowship will change from week to week. Few or more people may be present at a house or meeting place and the Spirit of God will act in accordance to the time and persons present. I believe fellowship should never turn into something regimented or formalistic. However it often becomes that especially when everything is controlled by one leader. Those unfamiliar with the kind of fellowship I have described need to experience for themselves what can happen in a place of meeting where the Spirit of God is given liberty! God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts and broken relationships and save peoples souls. The Holy Spirit administers just such actions. (See link to [Why We Gather](#))

The encroachment of formalism

A Religious spirit in the form of supremacy, control or formalism, continuously stalks the believer with the aim of transforming God-life into **dead religion**. I suppose church liturgy was put together in times past, following the kind of glorious fellowship described above. Liturgical forms may have started with good intentions with the hope of bottling up something very good and worthwhile, perhaps to preserve some of the glory of an earlier day.

If only God's manifest presence could be captured and preserved, but alas it can not. He is moving on as the pillar of cloud moved ahead directed the sojourners in the wilderness in the book of Exodus.

The Bible demonstrates that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed they were left with a lifeless object (a religious artifact or idol.) The temple remained, the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained, but the manifestation of its power was gone. A cistern remained, the fount of living water was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. Years and centuries past and only rituals and catechism remained supplanting the glory that had been lost. The ritual enactments remained and the liturgical trappings but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth God's 'glory' through waiting upon Him in faith.

As God's presence leaves it is replaced by religion. "Ministry" follows a similar transition. Leadership becomes the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts. It has come to pass that the priesthood or the clergy only is trained and authorized to govern and rule over the flock of God. But in the new covenant as it was presented to the saints, discipleship is the domain of every believer.

Here is a paradigm re-think: Abolish the Laity!

God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest,
just as he wishes each of us to become **a true worshiper**.

What is this true worshiper and what is worshipping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. Any one other than "true worshipers" fall short in worship. The natural mind is not accustomed to partaking in heavenly things. *These are strangers in the inner court of the temple.* Our Heavenly Father looks at the hearts he does not regard the man who is adorned with the outward regalia of religious uniform over any common believer whose heart is open.

The natural temple or cathedral is not the place of meeting. Our Father does not favor a cathedral over a Holy dwelling site inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, (It is not about where you worship,) not 'this mountain or another mountain,' **we worship what we KNOW!** Many *do not know what they are worshipping*. The truth is that worship is inseparable from salvation. Salvation is through the root and foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Almighty God in Spirit. Those without this Spirit receive nothing of the revelation and fellowship of God of which Jesus spoke. A divine meeting place for the first priest hood was a place behind the veil into the presence of God where no human could stand without having been made pure by scrupulous preparation. In the presence of God man does not utter a word nor risk the defilement of his own sweat.

Disciples, Learning the "Way"

The foundation of the life of Christ is laid by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Just as Jesus set about making disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) The Great Commission is about discipleship. Too often, the Christian world has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal through religion . It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious super heroes. It is too easy to lose the sense that Peter, James, Paul and Barnabus and the host of others are our brothers and our teachers. Though now having run their race, they shared the same life of trials and faith as we ourselves. In our minds Bible days were entirely another time, another kind of faith life , another dispensation. This is not the case. Religious tradition places men on pedestals. This should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons. s many that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace

You may be interested in checking out the writing of Frank Viola and George Barna

[See www.ptmin.org](http://www.ptmin.org) and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to open, house church. For any that have received the gift, (God Life, Grace and Power) minister it to one another, as good stewards

of the Grace of God. 1Peter 4:11

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