

Teaching E-mail 57

Our Father's Children Bear His Burden

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21)

(December 14, 2011)

“Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

The structure and format of education today leaves little room for students to become *like* their teacher. If teaching revolves around a lecture model and you have no intention of seeking a job in which you lecture, then that method has little carryover value for you. In fact, with the increased use of computers as “teachers”, you may be so accustomed to impersonal interaction with a screen image that discussion is becoming obsolete for you! And if what you’re learning has little connection to a future occupation or interest, you’ll most likely relegate the information to short-term memory—studying to pass a test, then forgetting it soon after.

How different from the biblical model spoken of by our Lord Jesus: *“Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”* Messiah’s method of discipleship training has absolutely nothing to do with the lecture and fact-inhalation style of contemporary education!

Our Lord’s Way of Discipleship

“All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Me. GOING therefore, disciple ALL THE NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE all things that I COMMANDED you; and behold, I am WITH you all the days until the completion of the age”

(Matthew 28:18-20, literal translation).

Notice the key priority of our Lord’s discipleship pattern. An authentic discipler first of all *bears the burden of the One Who sent Him—the salvation of mankind*. (See John 3:16-18.) Our Father’s *heart burden* is the driving force behind all the motives needed by a follower of Jesus.

“Burden” may seem like a negative word to you. But the word itself can refer to *“the main responsibility for achieving a specified aim or task.”* Our Father is the One Who through His Spirit in His sons and daughters bears the weight of His heart burden. Being yoked with Lord Jesus makes this a *labor of love* for His own, not a heavy obligation (Matthew 11:30). His hand undergirds our lives as we cooperate out of *love for Him* to bring to fruition this “specified aim” of discipling people into the Lordship of His Son!

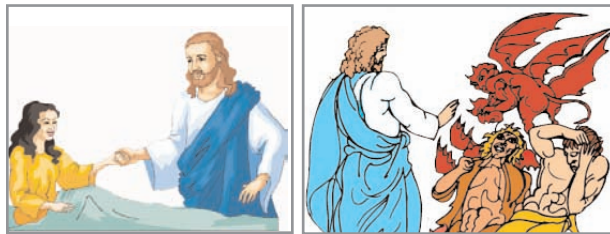
Discipling people into the Lordship of Jesus cannot be accomplished without establishing an *intimate relationship*. Discipling is coming alongside to *role model* and *instruct* so that he or she can *fully reproduce* within the disciple Christlike character and motives as well as content. The discipler *makes real* the content through the way he or she presents it, role modeling it as true and worthy way of life.

For example, you can’t miss the *relational connectedness* between Jesus and His disciples. Lodged within that pattern are two essential parameters: that you *know the Father*, and that you personally know the *one(s) you’re discipling*. The biblical discipler is the bridge extending one hand, so to speak, to the Father, and the other

hand to the disciple to illustrate “in the flesh” what living by the Spirit looks like. As the discipler actively bears Father’s burden to reconcile others to Himself through Jesus, he reproduces the model of His character and purpose in his disciple.

Consider discipleship from our Father’s perspective:

1. He loves us so much that He established the ONLY way to reconcile sinful mankind with Himself. (Romans 5:8)
2. Out of love, Jesus bore His Father’s burden and became man, suffering the temptations and physical weaknesses we all face. (Hebrews 2:14-18)
3. Because of His love Jesus bore the burden of the sins of all mankind on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-23)
4. Father’s burden for the salvation of all mankind needed to be passed along, so Jesus role modeled that love in action: “*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people*” (Matthew 4:23).



5. Then Jesus sent His disciples out to do the same as He had modeled: “*...Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:6-8).
6. Jesus followed up on His disciples by having them report back to Him the results of their obedient trust: “*The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name’*” (Luke 10:17).

7. When Jesus saw that His disciples had acquired the burden of His Father’s heart, He could promise them, “*...I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name*” (John 16:23).

8. Having learned to bear His Father’s burden, they could be entrusted with His power to do His will: “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...*” (Acts 1:8).

If you’re our Father’s child, it’s your privilege and responsibility to bear in your heart *His loving concern for souls*. That’s so you may disciple them in relational connectedness as did Jesus and depend on the empowerment of His Spirit to carry out Father’s will. The place to start is by asking yourself some questions:

- Out of love for your heavenly Father and for your fellow humans, does your own heart share His burden to reconcile others to Himself through His Son?
- Do you grieve for the people around you who have yet to experience His love and intimate fellowship with Him the way He longs for them to?
- Are you burdened to make whatever changes are needed in you and your family so that you can be fully used by Father on behalf of those who are headed for a Christ-less eternity?

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance”

(2 Timothy 3:10).

You might say that our Lord’s way of discipleship is like *spiritual cloning*—the disciple learns to become like his discipler, who is walking in the steps of Jesus as Lord. Paul clearly understood the importance of intimate relationship and role modeling in the discipleship process:

“...for in Christ Jesus I **became your father** through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to **imitate me**;” “**Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ**” (1 Corinthians 4:15,16;11:1)

Discipleship entails a *personal family relationship* as brothers or sisters who are united in the Spirit of Christ. The discipler imparts a *way of life* that reflects Jesus in love, character and motive, always conscious of Father’s burden for the salvation of humanity. The *walk* of the discipler aligns with his *talk*. It’s authentic, a life-style pattern intended to be lived out no matter what the disciple’s life situation. As Paul instructed his spiritual family in Philippi, “*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you*” (Philippians 3:17).

Bearing Father’s Burden

The starting point of discipling people isn’t *what* you’re going to teach them; rather, it’s *you* as a genuine reflection of Father’s loving burden and purpose. A heart motive of love that bears His burden for souls is the lifeblood of discipleship. The Hebrew word for love, *ahav* (ah-hahv’), conveys a passion and devotion for the one you love. It’s reflected by a longing for your Father and a deep desire to please Him—a far cry from being content to just *know about* Him.

The Hebrew letters in *ahav* traditionally mean “a window into the Father’s heart.” Jesus intimately *knew His Father’s heart*, and this sense of loving purpose and responsive obedience is the essential requirement for anyone in Jesus who would disciple another.

Love for our Father and a willingness to bear His burden are THE motive by

which the Spirit of Christ in us empowers us to disciple others. Only through a personal relationship with a disciple can we role model what that kind of love for God and for others looks like when it’s *put into practice*. This is certainly the pattern of our Lord Jesus with His disciples.

Burdened by His Father’s desire for the salvation of all, Jesus needed to not only be the perfect sacrifice by offering Himself as payment for the sins of the world. He also had to prepare Spirit-empowered disciples who were both imbued with His Father’s burden for the salvation of the world and fully trained to raise up other disciples.

The Bible is clear that Jesus did not “educate” His disciples in a classroom or formally “teach at” them as did the Scribes and Pharisees. Our Lord took His disciples *out into the world* so they could see how *He* made disciples. Then, learning from His example, they could follow that pattern themselves. His love for those He encountered was evident, and because of that love He responded to the heart need of even those considered “unlovable” by society, such as tax-collectors and prostitutes.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

The nature of *relational devotion* that’s needed by a disciple and discipler is wonderfully captured in the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer when they attacked a Philistine outpost. Jonathan told his armor bearer, “*Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few*” (1 Samuel

14:6). His companion's dedication to him is apparent in his response, "*Do all that you have in mind. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul*" (1 Samuel 14:7).

Think of the loyal commitment of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi when she promised, "*Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God*" (Ruth 1:16). This young woman could have returned to her own people and enjoyed life among those she knew. But her devotion to this older woman exceeded her own comfort zone and prompted her to put all she held dear on the altar.

And of course there's Lord Jesus, who after instilling His Father's burden for souls into His disciples, lovingly changed the nature of His relationship with them to something deeper and richer: "*I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you*" (John 15:15). This same kind of relational intimacy is personified by Paul and those he discipled (Philippians 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:11; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4).

Mike: As a young naval officer finishing my third deployment off Vietnam, I was assigned to the Operations Department at the Pacific Missile Test Center in Pt. Mugu, CA. I no sooner arrived than several guys warned me, "You don't want to work for Norm Gearhart (Head of the Ops Department)—he's a difficult man." I became Norm's Administrative Officer, a job which meant a lot of research to develop proposals that Norm would then send up the chain of command.

Norm had high and exacting standards, an area in which I needed much improvement. For several months we followed this pattern: He'd scrutinize my work, then he'd send me back again and again to do more research. In time I developed a competitive

spirit, making sure I was so thorough that he didn't need to do anything but sign the proposal.

But one day something clicked in my head. I finally realized that the proposals Norm sent up the chain of command affected the lives of many people, including the very survival of some. What a difference that realization brought about in me! I immediately found myself *bearing his burden*, and the whole atmosphere of our relationship changed. He became a father to me, taking a deep interest in my life and guiding me in many areas far beyond our work relationship. In essence, he *reproduced* himself in me. Elements of his character that I observed and experienced became part of me—something I'm so grateful for today.

It was while I was working for Norm that I began to read the Bible for the first time. I saw that the *discipleship* our Father called for was exactly what Norm was doing for me. Twenty-five years later he and I met up again and we discussed how he'd trained me during that time. The way he lived and the principles he clung to he had learned in God's Word. Just a few years ago Norm, my friend and a father to me, went home to the Lord he loved. But his legacy as my first discipler is planted deep in my heart.

You might want to reflect on someone in your own life who invested their heart and energy in you because they saw a willingness to learn and be changed. Then take the next step and let them know; if they're no longer alive let their family know what a difference that person made in your life. That's a *real* gift this season!

One day Jesus was confronted by His relatives, who expected immediate compliance because they were "family." But Jesus had this startling response: "*Whoever does the will of My Father in heav-*

en is My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50). Consider the beauty of the word “My” in this passage. *My* is an affectionate term that indicates you *belong* to the speaker. There’s an understood love that underscores relational intimacy and causes your heart to want to bear that person’s burdens. True discipleship is burden-bearing: first, being implanted with Father’s burden of love for humanity to be reconciled with Him, and then being burdened as His child to make Jesus and the fellowship of His Lordship known to others.

Discern Your Discippler’s Character and Way of Life

“Remember the ones leading you, who spoke to you the word of God. Looking at the result of their way of life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and unto the ages” (Hebrews 13:7,8, literal translation).

The same Spirit of Jesus who indwelt His followers 2000 years ago is the same from generation to generation. His power and His giftings produce an outcome of a *life set-apart* (sanctified) for Father to use for His Kingdom purposes (1Peter 1:1,2). The Bible makes clear a way of life that pleases our Father. As a discipler walks His path in repentance and obedient trust, those he or she is discipling can see what the character of Christ looks like and follow that example.

Here are some questions to ask about anyone who may be discipling you:

- **What has it cost this person to be true to Jesus in the face of unrighteous or worldly opposition?**

Paul made sure the Corinthian followers of Jesus knew what he had endured as

he was bearing Father’s burden for souls (see 2 Corinthians 11:22-33). This journey in Jesus isn’t for the self-seeking who want popular acceptance and an easy life!

To the contrary, Jesus was explicit about what His followers could expect if they walked the path of His Father’s will: *“A slave is not greater than his lord.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also”* (John 15:20). Through his own experience, Paul could affirm that *any* authentic follower of Jesus will suffer as they live to represent Him as Lord: *“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (2 Timothy 3:12).

Often a person who wants to disciple others but *hasn’t* experienced any sort of exclusion or ostracism because of their faith may know *about* the Father, but they don’t know Him intimately nor have they borne His burden that people come to Him through Jesus. A poignant example of the cost of following Jesus is described by Kyle Idleman in his compelling book, *“Not a Fan.”* (Zondervan, 2011). Boldly maintaining that following Jesus *always* costs you something, Idleman portrays the example of the cost to Nicodemus if he chose to authentically declare and follow Jesus as his Messiah and Lord:

“It would cost him a powerful position ...the respect of his co-workers... the source of his income and livelihood... friendships... some family relationships... Take a moment and jot down what following Jesus has cost you. How has following Jesus interfered with your life?”

You might want to answer this now.

- **Is your discipler actively living as a servant of our Father, bearing His burden for the lost?**

Do his or her actions and words flow from a genuine concern to reconcile people to the Father so they might share intimate fellowship in Jesus? Paul describes his own motives and willingness to do whatever's necessary to fulfill that purpose: "*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible*" (1 Corinthians 9:19). That declaration may make you wince, but in the Lordship of Jesus, following Father's will means having YOUR heart and mind transformed into HIS.

We are Christ's ambassadors, called to represent Him *as He is*, not what the world would have their own version of God to be. An ambassador reflects the will and purpose of the one who sent him no matter what the cost or danger. Father's burden of love to reconcile the world to Himself in Jesus is our intended assignment:

*"God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And **He has committed to us the message of reconciliation**. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us..."* (2 Corinthians 5:19,20).

Look for a discipler whose heart rejoices because of this high privilege as our Lord's ambassador, and who can bear witness to how the Spirit has been using him or her to fulfill this role. Serving as an ambassador is an *active response*, not a mere discussion topic. Learn from those who practice what they teach!

- **Does the discipler's life reflect the power of God at work in or through him or her? Is there testimony to God's divine intervention in his or her life?**

Because Paul's heart pressed earnestly into the call to bear Father's burden for souls, he was willing to pay the price of painful consequences. And, having spent so much time around Hellenist "talkers" like those in Athens, he made sure that the people he was discipling were as dependent on the Spirit to work in power as he was. Paul determined that there be no doubt about the distinction between the way God *works in power* and the way mankind *trusts in words*:

*"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but **of power**"* (1 Corinthians 4:20);

*"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the **Spirit's power**, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on **God's power**"* (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).

The entire account of the Acts of the Apostles is a testimony to us today of those who were infused with Father's burden to draw people to Jesus. Not only is His power demonstrated through His obedient servants; His divine intervention in their very lives bears witness that He works His power to open the hearts and spirits of those yet to trust (for example, see Acts 16:9,10; 28:1-8). It's clear that serving as our Father's ambassadors is no credit to ourselves. It's a grateful responsiveness that requires a humble heart: "*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that **this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us***" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

What the world needs to see right now is the power of God manifested through those whose hearts bear the Father's burden for mankind. Much of the Earth's population has had the Bible *taught at them* for centuries, but tragically with minimal lasting result. Isn't it time

we made disciples in the way our Father commands? If we're to do this, we must absolutely depend on His power as Paul so vibrantly exhorts:

*"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may **strengthen you with power** through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may **have power**, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this **love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His **power that is at work within us**, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen"* (Ephesians 3:16-21).

"I Like To Teach At People"

I (Mike) spent over a decade counseling church leaders. I'm grieved to report that one of the most common responses I heard from clergy was this: "I like to *teach at people*." One man was so taken with his "golden tongue" that he told me he was torn between teaching at a seminary or pastoring a church. It seems that the duties of caring for people got in the way of his desire to sermonize at them. Another took Mike to his church build-



ing to point out the lofty pulpit towering over the pews. The man added with a grin, "That pulpit is the reason I'm here. I like the control I have from up there!"

Keep in mind that the seminary professors who prepare prospective clergy are chosen because of their academic ability. I discovered while I was at semi-

nary that only a few professors had any real-life experience in the world that could relate to what they taught. The "**academic model**," as it's called, is designed to impart knowledge. This widely used model has filled Christendom with those who like to *teach at people*, but aren't willing to disciple biblically by *role modeling* a way of life others can follow.



The "**academic model**" permeates almost every leadership capacity within westernized Christendom—a concentration **ONLY** on conveying content. The discipler as a role model is nullified and ignored since the one teaching and the one learning have little or no interaction outside the formal instructional setting. Therefore the instructor generally has little personal knowledge of the individual lives of the ones they're teaching.



The person who "disciples" through this model may know *about* the Father through previous instruction he himself received. But most likely he has neither invested his heart to know Him more intimately, nor has he taken on Father's burden of love for mankind. This model of discipler is no more than a bridge between the content he's using and the person he's instructing.

The manner in which you learn is generally how you respond to others within that same compartment of your life, be it work or spiritual matters. Therefore, if your "discipler" confines your learning to an academic framework, then these are the results in you:

- If Father's motive to be reconciled with humanity isn't being modeled by your discipler, that love motive as a *way of life* isn't being passed along to you as the disciple.

• If the way of life of your discipler is unknown to you, then he or she has revealed nothing of the power Jesus promises His followers: “*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father*” (John 14:12).

• Neither you nor your discipler has any testimony to the power of God working through either of you because the entire system is based on *head knowledge* rather than the *applied power of the Holy Spirit*. What a sad contrast to Paul’s admonition: “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power*” (1 Corinthians 4:20).

A spiritually stifling consequence awaits you if the person who’s teaching you the Bible *doesn’t* have Father’s burden for the salvation of mankind and *isn’t* actively reaching out to make disciples himself. The danger is that you’ll become *just like him*.

Were You *Taught At*, or Shown How?

The “academic model” not only limits God’s Word to just another source of information. The unsurprising effect of this static method of ministry that dominates Christendom is that **listeners can’t visualize themselves actively doing the will of their heavenly Father**. If no one personally demonstrates *how* to do Father’s will, the content gets filed in their brains with all the other Christian teaching that *hasn’t changed their lives*.

The academic model is the *opposite* of the biblically Hebraic **discipleship model** through which our Father instills His burden and reproduces it in succeeding generations. The discipleship model is in a way analogous to Mike’s experience in his own flight training, as well as the method he later used as an instructor pilot:

- **You describe to the student what you want him to do.**
- **You show him how to do it.**
- **You watch him do it and make any necessary corrections.**

If you’re in a faith community that’s based on the academic model, you’ll *NEVER* learn how to make disciples of others as God’s Word calls for. You’ll most often find the ones who are bearing Father’s burden to be working outside the “church system.” It’s their heart responsiveness to His Spirit and His will all throughout the week that reflects Father’s heart, His *ahav* love.

The Hebraic method of discipleship training is based on *direct experience*: the way Jesus worked with His disciples, and the way Paul trained his. If the discipler is not able to provide direct experience, then he can effectively use *simulation*. Through stories and play-acting you can help the disciple put himself into the situation like Jesus did using parables.

For example, to reflect the depth of commitment needed to authentically love your neighbor, Jesus told the parable of a despised Samaritan helping a desperate Jew who’d been robbed and beaten (Luke 10:30-37). His listeners could judge their *own* degree of love as they evaluated the different responses of those in the story.

We wrote the **Kingdom Living Today** series so you could put yourself into the various stories as a vicarious participant. Many of these scenarios recount our own past experiences. So, if you don’t have a discipler who is coming alongside you, then prayerfully go through this series and put yourself in place of the characters. In time you’ll be amazed what the Spirit of Christ in you can do so that *you* will live a life that exudes our Father’s burden!

*“You will be My witnesses in
Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”*
(Acts 1:8).

Have you ever asked yourself, **“What does Jesus consider *my* ‘Jerusalem?’”** If you don’t know, ask Him. Ask our Lord to reveal to you which ones in your relational sphere do *not* have His Spirit indwelling them. Begin to intercede for them, making sure that your interaction with them is undergirded by the same motive of Jesus—that they might encounter Him as Lord of their lives and so fulfill His Father’s burden.