

MAKING DISCIPLES

By Allon Maxwell

It is central to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

By our acceptance of this foundation truth, we also acknowledge His total authority to speak for God and rule over us. True and complete acceptance of this authority requires our commitment to obedience in all that He taught about the way of life that pleases God.

To preach about the coming Kingdom, in isolation from His insistent call to repent and begin to live the life of the Kingdom NOW, is no Gospel at all.

The GOOD NEWS about the Kingdom is not simply that it is coming, but rather that its King will be Jesus; that all who share rulership with Jesus will bear the same likeness to God; and that its subjects, from the least to the greatest, will be taught to live like their rulers. Only so can the new Heavens and Earth be filled with righteousness.

Only so can all peoples of the earth receive the promised blessings of the Age to Come. Only so can a Kingdom be established, which will last for ever.

This Gospel age is the time of preparation for the Kingdom, when all who are to rule with Jesus, receive their training to rule. This training rejects the politics and methods of earthly Kingdom.

Instead, it is about how to live in close relationship with God, with all the barriers removed; how to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts until we can know God at the same level of sonship revealed by Jesus; how to experience the same level of communication between God and man that exists between Jesus and His Father; and how to give ourselves in service, sacrificing ourselves for others, as Jesus did for us.

This is Discipleship learning from the teacher. Without this training in holiness, no one can ever see God; no one can inherit the Kingdom. ([Hebrews 12:10](#))

He left a commission for His followers to make disciples of all nations.

His definition of a disciple was simple:

- * They are called to repentance as a condition of forgiveness. ([Luke 24:47](#))
- * They are baptised as believers of the Gospel of the Kingdom. ([Mark 16:16](#))
- * They are taught to observe ALL His commandments. ([Matthew 28:20](#))

It is implicit in this that those who are commissioned to the task must themselves be believers, loving Jesus and obeying Him as the necessary condition for receiving the Holy Spirit. ([John 14:15-16](#))

They are not to begin until they have received this token of Divine approval for their ministry. ([Luke 24:49](#))

To put it more directly, the Holy Spirit is given only to those who obey. No one, who does not himself obey, has Divine warrant to make disciples for Jesus.

It is manifestly impossible for any of us to teach with conviction, anything which we do not believe enough to practise in our own life. It is totally impossible to call others to put on the Divine nature, if we ourselves have not already begun to be transformed, by the renewing

of our own minds. Without this renewal we remain in darkness; amongst those blind teachers who lead their blind followers into the ditch of eternal destruction.

Jesus leaves no place for salvation without a genuine, life transforming repentance, in which the goal for change is measured by nothing less than God's own perfection. This standard is set, and the goal is stated clearly, in the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus did not simply introduce a new set of laws in place of an older, obsolete code.

His radical teaching challenges the VALUES of the unbelieving world, especially that part of the world which calls itself "Christian" but is not. It calls men to a CHANGE OF NATURE in which their minds will be recreated after the likeness of God.

True obedience to Jesus is not simply enforced mechanical conformity to a law.

It is the product of a faith which believes that the way of life taught by Jesus, is the only way to find God.

It is the outward expression of an inner transformation.

In Jesus, this nature is the reflection of His Father's glory. ([Hebrews 1:3](#))

In us, this transformed nature is the mark of our adoption as children of God.

It is the standard by which we must measure the progress of our own discipleship.

It is the standard by which the church must learn to measure the calling of its servants.

It is the standard by which men and women are convicted of sin and righteousness and judgement, when we bear witness to Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is God's new creation.

It is in defining the precise nature of the obedience, which is inseparable from the concept of new creation, that the church has most often failed to fulfil its divine commission to make disciples.

Too often, the real meaning of obedience to Jesus has been altered, explained away or ignored. Too often, certain costly elements of obedience have been relegated to the realm of "non-essential", in favour of a set of "essential" theological propositions, to which men give easy verbal assent, without surrendering their hearts.

In what follows, we attempt to define briefly, exactly what we believe Jesus meant when He called His disciples to a costly obedience, without which they could not be disciples at all. This is, in essence, the Sermon on the Mount.

These things are not "non-essential" or "optional". They are at the very heart of what it means to be a child of God.

To become a part of God's new creation, we must listen to the words of Jesus which call men to love Him and obey Him.

We must respond to His call to worship His Father as the only true God.

We must believe His claim to be the human son of God.

We must find inspiration to love Him in the simple story of His crucifixion, in which He reaches out to all, revealing the longing of God's heart to save us from our sins.

We must forsake human wisdom and human methods of searching for God, finding instead, His wisdom and His love in our own personal response to the cross.

We must recognise our own spiritual poverty, be convicted of our sin and our desperate need for a change of nature.

We must mourn for our sins with the Godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

We must express our repentance, our desire for a clean heart and a clear conscience, in a baptism where belief is declared, and sins are forgiven.

We must be meek; submitting tamely to the call to forsake the old ways and begin a new life under Jesus as our Lord.

We must hunger and thirst after righteousness to the exclusion of all other priorities, making any sacrifice necessary to cleanse our lives of sin.

We must extend mercy to others, in the same measure that we receive mercy from God, forgiving as readily and as often and as completely as God forgives us.

We must become totally pure in heart; pure enough to see God and live.

We must be peacemakers, dedicated to reconciliation even when our opponents are not, returning only the highest good for the worst evil.

We must be prepared to rejoice under the persecution which will be the certain lot of all true disciples of the Son of God.

We must be prepared to do good in a way which allows others to see the value of a life lived in obedience to God.

We may not relax even the least of God's commandments, nor teach other men so.

We will seek until we find; knock until the doors of Heaven open to us; give ourselves in total surrender; until God's laws are written for ever in our hearts and minds.

We will enter the narrow gate and walk the hard way, content to be amongst the few who know that it alone leads to life.

By these things we know that we have eternal life and that we do belong to the true God and to His Son Jesus Christ.

By these things our hearts are reassured that we really have received the Holy Spirit.

The new nature described here is the end result of loving God with ALL our heart, mind, soul and strength; and of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

This is how we become disciples ourselves. This is how we receive our commission to make disciples.

This is what was implied in the direction from Jesus for His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power from on high.

Into the life of disciples such as we have described, comes power from God to bear witness to His Son and authority from God to speak for Him.

When disciples with this testimony within themselves, bear witness to the power of Jesus to change human hearts and bring men into eternal relationship with His Father, it will bring the Kingdom near to the hearts of men who seek for God.

When we thus preach about the coming Kingdom, Jesus has promised to confirm the message to those who hear.