

# Biblical Patterns of Discipleship

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The Planning Committee assigned to me the task of writing a paper on the topic, *Biblical Patterns of Discipleship*. The purpose of assigning me this topic was to discover in Scripture the model (or models) of training and equipping individuals for ministry. Before embarking upon that task, it is important to understand the biblical term, *disciple*, and its implications.

- The noun, *disciple*, is a translation of the Greek term, μαθητής (*mathetes*).
- The feminine form is μαθήτρια (*mathetria*)<sup>1</sup>
- The verb, μαθητεύω (*matheteuo*) means “to become a disciple”<sup>2</sup>
- The root word from which these nouns derive is the verb, μανθάνω (*manthano*), which means “to learn.”

Thus, a disciple is a “learner.” He is more than a student or a pupil who sits in study hall and pores over history books, memorizing dates and names so that he can pass a test. A disciple is one who has a hunger to learn and by his words and deeds demonstrates that he has not merely studied, but that he has learned – he is a learner

The terms, *disciple*, and the verb, *to become a disciple*, or *to make disciples*, are found only in the Four Gospels and in Acts. They are not found in any of the epistles, nor in Revelation. In the Gospels, the term, *disciple(s)* is used for the individuals who followed Jesus from place to place listening to his teaching and observing His miracles. From the call of the Twelve onward, the term is used in a special manner for the Twelve. Context must be observed when deciding whether or not the term applies only to the Twelve, or to all of those who faithfully itinerated with Jesus.

In Acts, these terms are not used for those in training for leadership, but rather is the general term applied to all believers. The Great Commission is to go and make disciples.

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."<sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Occurring only once (Acts 9:36)

<sup>2</sup> In Matthew 28:19, this verb occurs in the imperative, aorist, active, second person, plural. It is a command to the Twelve to go and make disciples.

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible © the Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977.

Since the emphasis of the term in Scripture is upon becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, it is my opinion that there are better terms to use for developing those in leadership. The assumption is that these already are disciples of Jesus Christ. However, that must be established before one would proceed very far into training the prospective minister. The question must be asked of all such prospects, "Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?" For that reason, we begin with a brief discussion of the biblical teaching concerning being a disciple of Christ.

## **SECTION ONE:** **BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST**

**There are prerequisites to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.**

**The first of these is the necessity of counting the cost.**

Luke 14 records an incident that took place near the end of the third year of Jesus' ministry, when He was preparing to leave Perea. He was reclining at dinner in the home of a Pharisee. Responding to comments made at the table, Jesus told the parable of the rejected invitation.

*A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;<sup>17</sup> and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused. Another one said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused." Another one said, "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come" And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame." And the slave said, "Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." And the master said to the slave, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner." (Luke 14:15-24)*

The question must be asked, figuratively, at least:

- Do you love me more than your land
  - Do you love me more than your oxen
  - Do you love me more than your new wife
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Later while walking along the road with a crowd following, Jesus stopped and turned around and addressed the crowd – obviously using hyperbole.

*"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.<sup>27</sup> "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."<sup>28</sup> "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?<sup>29</sup> "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,<sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'<sup>31</sup> "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?<sup>32</sup> "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.<sup>33</sup> "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. (Luke 14:26-33)*

Jesus was making the clear statement, if you want to be my disciple, count the cost.

Matthew 8:19-22 is another passage that emphasizes this truth:

*Then a scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."<sup>20</sup> Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."<sup>21</sup> Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."<sup>22</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."*

**Question to be asked:** “In the light of these statements of Our Lord, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

**If one is ready to pay the cost of discipleship, then the next prerequisite is to be immersed in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name<sup>4</sup> of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*  
(Matthew 28:19-20)

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<sup>4</sup> The Greek text literally is translated, “into the name,” εἰς τὸ ὄνομα (*eis to onoma*). This is consistent with the language used consistently for saving faith, “believing into Christ” (example; John 3:16, ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν...*ho pisteuon eis auton*)The implication of the preposition, *eis*, is motion. So, the concept is not merely believing in Jesus, but believing in such a manner that the believer enters into a relationship with Christ. The same sense is present in the statement made concerning immersion *into* the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples, and the way to do that is first to immerse them and then to teach them.

In Romans 6, Paul described how one should view the implications of his immersion... as a death of the old man and the birth of a new man.

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death?<sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.<sup>5</sup> For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,<sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (Romans 6:3-6)*

This is in keeping with Jesus' statement to Nicodemus recorded in John 3:3-5, that one must be born "from above," – i.e., a new birth.

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (Greek – born from above)<sup>5</sup> he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5)*

This is in keeping with Paul's statements concerning our becoming a new creature

*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.<sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:14-17)*

*But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.<sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. (Galatians 6:14-15)*

**Question to be asked:** "In the light of these Scriptures, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?"

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<sup>5</sup> ἄνωθεν

**If one is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, the third prerequisite is grasping the principle of Christ's Lordship.**

*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>29</sup>  
 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."<sup>30</sup> "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Take my yoke--- a sign of submission. The picture is not a picture of two oxen in a double yoke, with Jesus on one side and the disciple on the other. The yoke was a sign of submission – Paul spoke of the yoke of the Law (Acts 15:10 and Galatians 5:1). Some slaves wore a yoke as a sign of their being slaves.

Learn of me... The Greek says, Learn *from* me ἀπό (*apo*). Note what Jesus clearly said,

- Get your learning from me... I am your Master teacher.
- Before you can learn from Me, you must take my yoke upon you.

**Question to be asked:** “In the light of this Scripture, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

**After the prerequisites are met, then the disciple must learn to keep all things that Christ has commanded.**

**These things are to be “observed,” “kept,” “preserved.” The term is, τηρεῖν (*terein*). The term occurs seventy-five times in the New Testament. Here are some examples of its usage:**

- It is used to describe the guarding a prisoner (Acts 12:5; 16:23)
- It is used to exhort a father to keep his virgin daughter (I Corinthians 7)
- It is used to exhort to keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3)
- It is used to exhort one to obey a command (Matthew 19:17; John 14:15)

The use of this term implies the importance of not allowing the commands to be lost – to guard and keep these as precious, but it also means that a disciple must learn to obey those things that Jesus taught and commanded.

**What are the, “all things that I have commanded you,” commands and teachings?**

The longest discourse of Jesus' recorded in Scripture is what we have labeled The Sermon on the Mount... Matthew 5-7. What did He teach and command in this sermon?

- 5:21-26 Crucify your pride when there is a problem between you and another Christian – crucify your pride and seek restoration.
- 5:27-32 Crucify your lustful impulses which are a part of your human nature and get rid of anything that stimulates that lust.
- 5:33-37 Crucify that prideful part of you that boastfully makes a vow and then in an “I can do” sense, fulfills that vow. Rather become known as one who keeps his word and needs no vow to impress hearers with the certainty that your word will be kept.
- 5:38-48 Crucify that need for vengeance – that prideful attitude that says, “no one will trample me!” Instead, be gracious to those who mistreat you and remember, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12)
- 6:1-18 Crucify the need for others to see what you do and compliment you. Do your best to do good deeds in secret, when only you and God know about your deeds, your fasting, and your prayers.
- 6:19-34 Crucify that need to trust in the wealth of the world or anything that you can hold in your hand. Live obediently and faithfully by your faith in God
- 7:1-5 Crucify that critical and judgmental spirit that is so inherent in our human nature.

**Question to be asked:** “In the light of these Scriptures, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

**A disciple of Jesus Christ will crucify his need for a title and find his worth and identity in his relationship with Jesus Christ.**

*"They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,<sup>7</sup> and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.<sup>8</sup> "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.<sup>9</sup> "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.<sup>10</sup> "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.<sup>11</sup> "But the greatest among you shall be your servant.<sup>12</sup> "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. (Matthew 23:6-12)*

God loves us enough to remove, one by one, those things in which we find our worth and self-esteem until we are content to have as our identity, “I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.”

If we are sincere in our efforts to be disciples of Jesus Christ, Our Lord will assist us in our efforts to crucify our ungodly humanity and thus, develop a godly humanity. The prophet Drew Graham had a saying concerning pride, “In order to find out whether or not a dog is dead, kick it.” Our Lord cares enough for His disciples to bring about circumstances where our pride will be exposed by “kicking it” until we admit that we have pride in an area – especially in the area of needing position and a title.

**Question to be asked:** “In the light of these Scriptures, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

### **A disciple lives to glorify his Master.**

*Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;<sup>6</sup> not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.<sup>7</sup> With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,<sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5-8)*

*Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:22-24)*

**Question to be asked:** “In the light of these Scriptures, are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

All of this being said, the first step toward mentoring and training someone for a ministry role, is making certain that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If there is some lack in this area, then bringing that person into being a true disciple of Jesus Christ is where the process must begin.

## **SECTION TWO:** **TRAINING FOR MINISTRY**

### **Part One: Jesus' Training Model**

We first examine the model of training that Jesus displayed. Then we will turn to other New Testament examples.

#### **The Calling of the Twelve**

(Matthew 4:23-5:1; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19)

#### **Matthew's Account:**

*Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.<sup>24</sup> The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.<sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.*

*When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. (Matthew 4:23-5:1)*

#### **Mark's Account:**

*And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.<sup>14</sup> And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,<sup>15</sup> and to have authority to cast out the demons.<sup>16</sup> And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter),<sup>17</sup> and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder");<sup>18</sup> and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot;<sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. (Mark 3:13-19)*

#### **Luke's Account:**

*It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.<sup>13</sup> And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:<sup>14</sup> Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;<sup>15</sup> and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;<sup>16</sup> Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.<sup>17</sup> Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all*

*Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon,<sup>18</sup> who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.<sup>19</sup> And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all. (Luke 6:12-19)*

A chronological construction of the ministry of Christ (which requires a study of the entire corpus of the Gospels) and a harmonizing of the three Gospel accounts of Jesus' selecting the Twelve, results in the following picture.

Jesus' ministry lasted a little over three years. The scene before us took place near the middle of the second year, which was the chronological mid-point of his ministry. Prior to the calling of the Twelve, Jesus had labored single-handed. During the first half of His ministry, his miraculous deeds for the most part were confined to a limited area, and most of His teaching was of an elementary character. By the time the Twelve were chosen, His teaching was becoming deeper and more elaborate, and His gracious activities were becoming more widespread.

He was on a teaching tour of Galilee when the calling of the Twelve took place. From the Scriptures cited above, we learn that a great multitude of people from all points of the compass, many coming from remote regions, had flocked into Galilee to follow Jesus<sup>6</sup>. They were eager to see His miracles<sup>7</sup> as well as being eager to hear his words.

The episode to which we are giving our attention began at the foot of a mountain. A harmonization of the three accounts produces the following probable scenario:

- Jesus ascended up the mountain a short distance to a point from which He could see the crowd.
- He called out of the crowd certain ones to come to Him.
- He then turned and, unaccompanied, went higher up the mountain where He could be alone; He spent the night in prayer.
- The next morning, He descended from the mountain to where those whom he had called out of the crowd were waiting for him. Evidently these and most of the multitude had not left the site.

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<sup>6</sup> (A) People from Galilee, where he was ministering at the time; (B) people from the Decapolis [a region to the east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Originally this was a confederation of ten cities that were Roman strongholds, but in time came to refer to the region rather than to the confederation of the ten cities]; (C) People from Jerusalem and the countryside of Judea; (D) People from the regions beyond the Jordan.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 4:23-25

- From those whom Jesus had called out of the crowd the evening before, Jesus chose twelve. These twelve men were to become apostles whom Jesus later would send out to preach and have the authority to cast out demons.
- Jesus and those with Him on the mountainside then descended to a level place, slightly above the crowd, where Jesus sat down and delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

A number of salient points relevant to our study emerge from this account:

1. Jesus called out of the multitude a group of men who were potential apostles.
2. He spent the night in prayer; no doubt seeking from His Father wisdom and guidance as to whom, out of the select group waiting below, He should choose to become His apostles.
3. After the night in prayer He chose twelve men from the group that He earlier had called out of the multitude. These twelve men He named as apostles.
4. These twelve men were to be with him day and night.
5. After a season of training and development, He would send them out as apostles, commissioned to preach and minister in the spiritual authority that He would give to them.

It is of interest to note that on the night that He was betrayed, Jesus reflected back on this event and all that He and his inner circle had experienced since He had called them to become his constant companions. That tender scene is recorded in John Chapters 13-17. At one point during the lengthy emotional discourse, Jesus said to the eleven (Judas had left the group by the time of this statement),

*"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:16)*

The statement, *You did not choose Me but I chose you*, as well as the description of that calling as described in the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, causes us to consider the manner in which a disciple becomes a trainee/apprentice. If we follow Jesus' model, we will recognize those in the congregation who have the potential to become trainees, but we also will realize that not all with that potential are to become our trainees.

We cannot give ourselves to everyone and there is not enough time to train everyone. Therefore, we must hear from God concerning to whom we are to give ourselves and which of those who have potential we are to invite to join us in intentional training and development. Exhaustion, frustration, and disappointment

usually result when one undertakes the training of one whom God has not chosen for us.

In a plural elders' council, it is not unusual for Our Lord to give one trainee to one elder and another trainee to another elder. Often God's mating of an elder with a particular trainee is a reflection of the nature of God's purpose for that trainee and the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon him; an elder who has a similar calling and gifting is the one to whom God would assign the development of a particular trainee. As stated earlier, this is a matter that must be couched in prayer.

The Twelve were chosen so that *they would be with Him*. From that time onward, they were with Him night and day, except for those seasons when He would send them out in ministry. They ate together, they slept together, day after day they walked together, no doubt they used the latrine together; they experienced the seasons of glory and disappointment together. Everything that He experienced, up to the time of His arrest, they experienced together. He even sought to share with some of them his time of agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, but they fell asleep. For that matter, although He and they experienced it differently, they did endure the experience of His arrest.

It is interesting that on only two occasions did Jesus apply the term, "friend," to anyone. On both occasions (Luke 12:4; John 15:13-15) the term was applied to the Twelve. The appellation, "friend," was an acknowledgement of the intimacy and shared life that had been theirs, through thick and thin.

If we follow this model of Jesus' then we must share life and all of its experiences with those whom we train. How that looks will vary from situation to situation and person to person, but time together is essential. Unfortunately, some discipleship programs are so formalized that no natural sharing of life is possible. Such programs consist of going through a manual and memorizing assigned passages of Scripture, or some other exercise, but there is no experiencing of life together. If, on the other hand, we follow the example of Jesus, the sense of the relationship between trainer and trainee is, "We are in this together; our lives are open to one another and we are available to one another," even if some formalized program is a part of the experience.

In order to avoid pitfalls, we must recognize some caveats concerning Christ's style of training the Twelve – which distinguish His activity from how we undertake the task assigned to us:

- The first of these is Christ's purpose and mission. His primary mission was to go to the cross and make atonement for our sins, followed by His victory

over the grave through His resurrection. Related to that mission was the training of those who after Pentecost would be his representatives in leading the Church. In the process of fulfilling these missions, He fulfilled another important mission – revealing the character of the Father.

- Christ was unmarried. He did not have the responsibility of caring for a wife, nor that of providing for and caring for children – he did not have the responsibility of developing a healthy family life.
- After He began his ministry, Christ did not have an income producing job. He did not have a time clock to punch, nor an employer to please, nor a product to produce in order to have an income.
- Since He had no other occupation and time was limited, He could give Himself totally to the mission. After He chose the Twelve, He had less than two years to train and develop them to the degree that was necessary for their lifetime task – a task of such eternal importance that it would be difficult to exaggerate.

The lifetime task to which the apostles were commissioned had several elements, some of which were distinctive to them (Paul, later chosen as an apostle, had the same mission):

- being witnesses to the reality of the resurrection<sup>8</sup>
- to make disciples from all nations (the record in Acts extends this role to those other than the Twelve)<sup>9</sup>
- being the authoritative communicators of the Gospel and the ancillary teaching that was an important part of “the faith”<sup>10</sup> (Paul, chosen later as an apostle, had the same role)<sup>11</sup>
- to lead the early Church and to bring forth their successors in leadership<sup>12</sup>

The training of the Twelve was tailored to prepare them for the unique role to which they were called. Their calling and ministry was foundational. Future leaders would build upon the foundation that God laid through them.

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<sup>8</sup> The Twelve considered this to be their primary mission: Acts 1:8, 21-22; 2:22-24, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 33; 5:30-32; 10:39-42, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:18-22

<sup>10</sup> This teaching became known as “the apostles’ doctrine.”

<sup>11</sup> John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 12:14-16; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 11:23; 15:3; Galatians 1:11-12; Jude 3

<sup>12</sup> Acts Chapters 2-15 reports the Apostolic leadership of the Twelve in Jerusalem, the birth of elders (Acts 11:30, 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23); Acts 14:23; Titus 1:4-5

Even though the training of the Twelve had unique purposes and dimensions, Jesus' example of training the Twelve is a model to be studied and adapted to the training of church leaders in every generation.

During the season of my life in which I did nighttime janitorial work, a very precise formula controlled how new employees were trained.

- On the first night, the trainer said to the trainee, "Tonight, don't do anything but watch me work. Pay close attention to everything that I do, but just watch; don't try to help."
- On the second night, the trainer said to the trainee, "Tonight, we will do the job together. I will make corrections and instruct you if you are not doing the job correctly."
- On the third night, the trainer said to the trainee, "Tonight, you do the job by yourself. The only thing that I will do is watch you and make suggestions when you are making mistakes or not doing the job well."
- On the fourth night, the trainer said to the trainee, "Tonight, you are on your own. I am leaving the building, but I will be back in a few hours, after you have finished and gone home. I will examine the premises to see how well you did and I will leave you a note if I see things that need improvement. After that, I will drop by the building once each week to inspect your work and talk to the building occupants to make certain that all is being done to their satisfaction."

This pattern produced excellent janitors.

In a somewhat general way, we see this pattern modeled in Jesus' training of the Twelve. They had watched Him and learned from Him for more than a year before He called them to be trainees. From the moment of their call, Our Lord began to instruct them. His training involved instruction, on the one hand, and practical experience on the other. He increasingly revealed to them the character of the Father. He demonstrated how to deal with people, both friend and foe. He taught them to trust Divine resources. He taught them to conduct their lives according to eternal priorities. In time, after they had undergone several months of training, He sent the Twelve out on their first solo ministry trip.

### **The Apostles First Preaching Tour**

Matthew 9:35-11:1; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6

It of interest to note the dual motive that caused Christ to send the Twelve on their inaugural solo ministry. On the one hand, He was moved by His compassion for the multitudes and the need to multiply ministry to them. On the other hand, the sending out of the Twelve was stage three in their training experience. Of the three

Gospel accounts of this event, Matthew gives the fullest description of Jesus' heart for the people and the resulting commissioning of the Twelve.

*Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*

*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

*Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*

*These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them... "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. (Matthew 10:5-8)*

Three things stand out in Our Lord's instructions to the Twelve as He sent them out as fledging apostles/evangelists:

- The first of these is the limited sphere assigned to them. Eventually they would be told to go into all of the world and preach the Gospel, but on this training mission they were to confine their work to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Certainly, one reason for this limitation was God's plan to begin the Gospel age among the Jews, but there probably was another reason as well. The Twelve were not ready for ministry among Samaritans or Gentiles.

We can imagine what might have happened if they had gone into a Samaritan village and found themselves in a dispute concerning the religious differences between Samaritans and Jews.<sup>13</sup> Based on the episode in Luke 9:52-56, they probably would have lost their temper and then sought to call down fire from heaven. Furthermore, it was not until the Holy Spirit sovereignly overcame Peter's prejudice against Gentiles that the early Church was forced to acknowledge that Gentiles had a place in God's Kingdom (Acts Chapters 10 -11).

So, as with any wise trainer, Jesus limited their sphere to an arena that they were ready to handle.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, John 4:19ff

The second matter that catches our eye is the specific description of their mission and its stated purpose.

Their message was very limited, but they were endowed with unlimited powers of healing and casting out demons. Matthew 10:1 states, *He gave them authority* and Luke 9:1 states that He gave them *power and authority*. The term rendered as *authority* is ἐξουσία (*egzousia*). This term refers to having full authority within oneself, but it is a “bestowed” authority. This is the term used in Matthew 28:18, in which Jesus said, *All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth*. It seems that this authority was given only for this preaching tour, because after they returned, we do not find any record of their performing miraculous deeds until after Pentecost. Their power to heal all manner of diseases and the authority to cast out demons was not a permanent endowment. The endowment that they received at Pentecost, when they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a permanent endowment for the apostles.

On this preaching tour, they were functioning as Jesus’ agents, in the authority that He had given to them. Thus, everywhere they went, *His name was spread abroad* (Mark 6:14).

Their message, on the other hand, was quite limited. They did not have the full Gospel message to preach at this time (the crucifixion and resurrection were about a year in the future). They proclaimed that the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven was imminent. The Jews were looking for the Messianic Kingdom, which they viewed as being a kingdom on earth. The message of the Twelve described the Messianic Kingdom as the Kingdom of Heaven, not a kingdom of this earth. One of the reasons that Jesus encountered opposition among some of the Jews was His refusal to set up an earthly kingdom. For this reason, the Zealot Party became his enemies.<sup>14</sup>

- The third element in Jesus’ commissioning of the Twelve was His specific instructions as to how they were to conduct the mission.

They were told what their equipment should be, the source of their support, and the simplicity of life that was to characterize their ministry. It is a point of interest to note that the instructions given them are divided into two parts:

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<sup>14</sup> The Greek terms used catch our attention. The term rendered *is at hand* (KJV), *is near* (NAS, NIV), is the Greek term, ἤγγικεν (*ehngiken*). This is the indicative, perfect, active, third person of the verb, ἐγγίζω (*engizo*). The perfect tense in Greek indicates a present state which is the result of a past action. Thus, literally, the Greek says, *the Kingdom of Heaven has come near*. The idea is that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near and now is near. Both directly and indirectly, this referred to the presence of Jesus. The Kingdom can be summarized under the rubric, “Wherever the King is received as the King, that is the Kingdom.” Today, that rubric applies to both individuals and groups.

1. First: those things that relate to the immediate ministry before them. These are recorded in all three of the Synoptics.
2. Second: those things that would relate more to the distant future. These are recorded only in Matthew (10:16-42).

The tenor of Jesus' instructions was, "Don't make preparations for the journey, go as you are." They were not to travel encumbered by baggage. If they had sandals they were to use them, but they were not to take along an extra pair; if they had a staff to help navigate the rocky roads, they were to take it. They were not to be troubled about food, raiment, or housing, but to trust in God completely for these provisions. They were not to be changing lodging daily, especially moving up the ladder in accommodations, but were to stay in the first home that welcomed them. They were to be a blessing to every home that welcomed them.

If a town did not receive them, they were to move on, but as they left they were to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against that town. They were warned that they would face opposition and were instructed as to how they should handle it.

In short, it can be said that Jesus fully instructed them before He sent them out on the mission. Nothing was left to chance.

#### EXCURSUS

Several months later, Jesus sent out a group of seventy disciples. They were commissioned to undertake a ministry similar to that which the Twelve had undertaken (Luke 10:1-24). We know that the Twelve were not included in the seventy, because Luke states, *Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.* (Luke 10:1). The Seventy were sent out as Jesus' "advance men," to stir among the villages an anticipation of Jesus' future visit. The Seventy were given the same message that had been given to the Twelve, and from their report after they returned, it is evident that they were given the same spiritual authority that Jesus gave to the seventy.

*...heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'* (Luke 10:9)

*The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."* (Luke 10:17)

- Although not specifically mentioned in the biblical account, it is obvious that Jesus was preparing the Twelve for the role that would be theirs after

Pentecost. The training experiences that He created for them were designed to prepare them for that role. Their arena would be localized, initially, but after the inaugural days of the Church, the Twelve would become trans-local in their ministry activities. Had their future been that of being an elder in a local fellowship, their training might have been different.

### **The Aftermath**

After the Twelve returned from their preaching tour, they spent approximately a year with Jesus before His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. During this year they witnessed and participated in some of the most dramatic events in Jesus' ministry. Instruction and training continued to the time of the ascension.

### **Summary & Conclusions**

From the above study, the following conclusions can be drawn concerning apprenticing and training disciples for leadership and ministry roles:

1. We should be aware of those in the flock who have the potential to be involved in some type of ministry.
2. We should realize that God has not called us to train and apprentice all who have potential
3. We should prayerfully seek guidance as to whom we should invite to become our trainees.
4. Once the relationship between the apprentice and his trainer is established, it is important to share life together, to some degree.
5. The training regimen will be that which is appropriate to the calling of the trainee.
6. The apprentice/trainee will observe how his trainer conducts ministry.
7. As opportunity presents itself, the trainer and trainee will do ministry together.
8. In time, the trainee will function alone, with the trainer giving advice.
9. When the trainee is released to do ministry alone, it is important to take a realistic look at what he can do without putting the trainee and others at risk.
10. It is important that the fledging minister be advised of pitfalls and how to conduct himself when he is opposed.
11. The trainee must learn to trust the Holy Spirit in the exercise of ministry, more than he trusts his training.
12. Regardless of how experienced and mature one might become, some sort of accountability relationship is important.

## Part Two: Training Models Displayed in the Early Church

### Barnabas and Saul

The first record of a post-Pentecostal relationship that could be seen as a mentor/intern relationship is that of Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus. We admit that some assumptions must be made and some interpretation must take place in order to picture their relationship as we present it in the following paragraphs.

By the time Barnabas had recruited Saul to serve with him in Antioch, Saul had been a believer and a front-line evangelist on his own for about seven years. So, he was not an inexperienced neophyte when Barnabas recruited him.

Pertinent to our study is a recognition of the qualities of character, temperament, and gifting that were resident in Barnabas. His birth name was Joseph; he was a Levite who had been born on the Island of Cyprus. Given his long history with the Jerusalem Church and the esteem with which he was held in that church, it is probable that he had been present on Pentecost when the Church was born<sup>15</sup>.

He was a man of dignified bearing and appearance. In Lystra, after the miraculous healing of a lame man, the people began calling Barnabas, *Zeus*, the father of the Gods (they called Paul, *Hermes*, the spokesman of the Gods). He was a generous man (Acts 4:36-37), a good man, and one who was full of the Holy Spirit, and faith (Acts 11:24).

Because of his temperament and deportment, Joseph had been given the sur-name, *Barnabas*. The name literally means, “son of prophecy”<sup>16</sup>. The Hebrew/Aramaic name, *Barnabas*, would indicate that he was a *proclaimer*. Technically, Luke’s rendering of *Barnabas* is not a translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic term. Had Luke literally translated the name into Greek, he would have used the Greek term, προφητεία (*propheteia*), “prophecy.” Instead of translating the name literally, he chose the Greek term, *parakletos* (παράκλητος), *one who is called alongside*.

- Our Lord spoke Aramaic. Thus, all quotes of Jesus’ sayings that we have in Scripture are the writer’s translation of Jesus Aramaic into Greek. John employed the term, *parakletos*, five times in his Gospel, when he translated into Greek, Jesus’ statements concerning the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). English versions, in rendering these verses in John, use a variety of terms: *Comforter* (ASV and KJV), *Helper* (NAS), *Counselor* (NIV), and *Advocate* (NLT).

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 2

<sup>16</sup> *bar nbhua* בַּר-נְבוּאָה

- John also used *parakletos* in his First Epistle to describe Jesus' role in our behalf before the Father ( John 2:1). English Language versions render the passage in I John 2:1 as *Advocate* (ASV, KJV, NAS, NLT) and *one who speaks in our defense* (NIV). All of these are attempts to convey what *one who comes alongside* means in each context.

We must ask, why did Luke write that the translation of Barnabas is, “Son of Consolation, rather than Son of Prophecy”? A possible explanation is that since New Testament prophecy is for *edification, and exhortation, and consolation*,<sup>17</sup> Luke rendered the Hebrew/Aramaic term for prophecy as, *called along-side*, because in the Church, that is the function of New Testament prophecy. Perhaps Luke was using the Dynamic Equivalency style of the NIV, rather than the formal equivalency style of the NAS.

Needless to say, Barnabas was a man with a heart for people who encouraged them and exhorted them in their life with Christ. When we read of Barnabas' conduct in the Book of Acts, we see a picture of man with these kind and gracious traits.

It was Barnabas who first received Saul in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> Given that Saul had been a rabid persecutor of believers, it was difficult for the Jerusalem saints to trust Saul's story of his conversion. They probably thought that his story was a ploy to get inside of their ranks and then to destroy them. However, for reasons that are not clear, other than his tendency to be a compassionate man, Barnabas became convinced that Saul's story was true. Because Barnabas was held in high esteem by the apostles, his endorsement of Saul was sufficient for the apostles to receive their former persecutor, Saul, as their new brother.

Saul, true to his inherent zealous temperament, immediately took up where the martyred Stephen had left off.<sup>19</sup> He began talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews who were unable to refute his arguments. As a result, they planned to silence him the same way that they had Stephen, but the Jerusalem disciples spirited Saul out of the city and sent him back home to Tarsus. He spent about four years evangelizing the region around Tarsus (he described his efforts during this period as being in Cilicia and Syria – Galatians 1:21).

It is interesting to note that the very next verse following the statement that the Jerusalem saints sent Paul back to Tarsus, declares that the Church entered a time of peace.

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<sup>17</sup> I Corinthians 14:3

<sup>18</sup> Acts 9:26-27

<sup>19</sup> Acts 6:8 – 7:60

*But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase. (Acts 9:30-31 NAU)*

No statement is made in Luke's description of Saul's activities that would lead us to believe that Saul's propensity for argument and debate converted anyone to Christ. He had only stirred up trouble. As soon as he left town, peace was enjoyed and the Church throughout all of Palestine was built up.

Acts Chapter 11 does a flashback in verses 19-21. These verses inform us that when Saul of Tarsus launched his horrible campaign against the Church, following the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), that some of the refugees who fled Jerusalem ended up in Syrian Antioch. When they arrived, they preached the Gospel, first to the Jews and then to Gentiles. The result was the first known church that consisted of both groups.

When the apostles in Jerusalem learned of this rapidly growing church, they sent Barnabas to look over this new expression of the Kingdom and to assist in its development (Acts 11:22-24). Barnabas' concern was for the health of the church and the perseverance of the Saints, rather than aggressive evangelism (Acts 11:23). Interestingly, Barnabas' concern for a healthy church resulted in the conversion of many souls – Luke describes the many conversions in such a manner that it appears that they are the by-product of the spirit of Barnabas (Acts 11:24).

The church was growing so rapidly that Barnabas was not able to fulfill adequately the need for instruction and oversight. He needed help. He knew that Saul, well trained in the Scriptures and with an obvious calling upon his life, was somewhere in and around Tarsus, so he set out for Tarsus to find Saul. In time he did find him and brought him back to Antioch to become his co-laborer in building up the church.

Saul's experience up to that time had been as a front-line evangelist and debater (as already noted, for about seven years). He had not borne the responsibility of patiently working with new converts, teaching them and guiding them down the path toward maturity. Neither had he experienced the responsibility of local church leadership. Both of these roles, under Barnabas' influence, contributed to the development of the future apostle. For an entire year, Barnabas and Saul taught hosts of new converts and the church became one of the strongest and most stable congregations of the First Century.

After about one year, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to leave the work at Antioch and embark upon the first apostolic missionary enterprise (Acts 13:1-3). It

was not many days into their first trip before Barnabas and Saul became Paul and Barnabas. The mentor, Barnabas, was exceeded by his student, Paul.

Here is a wonderful example of every mentor's hope - that the one whom he is mentoring will find his role in the Kingdom and surpass his mentor in fruit and influence. So it was with Barnabas and Saul. This is a difficult step for many mentor/trainers. It is difficult for some to recognize when boot-camp has ended and the trainee not only has graduated but has moved full-stride into his calling. Older men, who have a part in the development of younger men, need the attitude, "when they do a good job, I have done a good job."

### **Barnabas and Mark**

The second example of mentoring/training that we find in Acts also involves Barnabas. When Barnabas and Saul had left Antioch on their first missionary journey, they took with them Barnabas' cousin, John Mark.<sup>20</sup> John Mark went along to be their helper. However, when the journey became both difficult and dangerous, he left the team and went back to Jerusalem,.

After Paul and Barnabas had completed their first tour, they returned to Antioch, then made the trip to Jerusalem where the question of Gentile reception into the Church was resolved. They returned to Antioch and spent considerable time there.

The time came when Paul suggested that he and Barnabas revisit the churches that they had planted on their first trip. Barnabas thought that it was a good idea and said that he would like to take his cousin, John Mark, with them. Paul objected, because of John Mark's defection on the first trip. Their disagreement over this question became so sharp that they went their separate ways. Barnabas went back home to Cyprus, taking John Mark with him. Paul chose Silas to accompany him on the second missionary trip.

We do not have any certain information concerning what Barnabas and John Mark did after they left Antioch. However, it seems clear that Barnabas was effective in bringing the unreliable young man to a place of great usefulness in the kingdom. During the waning days of Paul's second imprisonment, not long before his death,

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<sup>20</sup> The King James Version in Colossians 4:10 identifies John Mark as Barnabas' nephew. However, the Greek term, ἀνεψιός is more properly understood as "cousin," and most of the more recent versions render it as such. John Mark was from Jerusalem and we do not know how he ended up in Antioch (the two most probable are that either he was a part of the group that fled Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's death, and ended up in Antioch, or, he traveled to Antioch with Barnabas when Barnabas was sent to Antioch as the apostles delegate.

he asked Timothy to come to him and to bring John Mark because John Mark would be useful..

*Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.(II Timothy 4:11)*

Something had happened to John Mark. We must assume that Barnabas - the accepting Barnabas- the encourager Barnabas- the exhorter Barnabas - had been used of God to make an untrustworthy young man into one whom the aged apostle judged to be useful in the Kingdom.

Barnabas is an example of recognizing the potential in individuals. He saw the potential both in Saul of Tarsus and in John Mark. Through Barnabas, Our Lord supplied to each of these men the mentoring needed to bring them into their respective roles and their mentoring began when an older brother recognized the potential in each of them.

### **Paul, Silas, Titus, and Timothy**

Paul had a number of traveling companions and team members during his years of missionary activity. The three who are best known are Silas, Titus, and Timothy.

#### **Paul and Silas**

Silas was one of the leading men of the Jerusalem Church and a recognized prophet<sup>21</sup> when Paul first met him. The occasion was the dispute over the admission of Gentiles into the Church. When the Jerusalem Council sided with Paul and Barnabas, they composed a letter to be read among the Gentile Churches. They sent two of their leading men to carry the letter and to authenticate it.

*Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, (Acts 15:22 )*

When Paul launched his second missionary journey, Silas went with him as his partner. Reading the record in Acts, it is clear that Paul was the apostolic leader of the team, but Silas was a mature brother who shared fully in the responsibility for the ministry – at times Silas went one way and Paul went another, only to link up again, later (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5). From the record of the relationship that existed between Paul and Silas, it would be inappropriate to label Paul as Silas’ trainer or mentor. Both were strong men of maturity in Christ who labored side by side, even though Paul was the team leader.

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<sup>21</sup> Acts 15:32

## Paul and Titus

Titus is not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. However, from Paul's statement in Galatians 2:3 we learn that Titus was present at the Jerusalem Conference described in Acts Chapter 15.

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.<sup>2</sup> It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.<sup>3</sup> But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. (Galatians 2:1-3)*

From this description of the Acts 15 episode, it is clear that Titus lived in Antioch and was one of those whom the Antioch Church had chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas on the trip to confer with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> Since he was chosen to be a part of that delegation, we would assume that he was a man of some standing in the church in Antioch.<sup>23</sup> We know nothing of Titus' history prior to the Jerusalem conference, but in Paul's introduction to the Epistle to Titus, Paul described Titus as, *my true child in a common faith.*<sup>24</sup> Given that Titus had been active in the Church at Antioch, it is possible that this terminology was a reflection of Titus' becoming a believer through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, while they were teaching in that church. All of this, of course, is speculation.

Titus frequently was Paul's delegate sent to deal with the troublesome church in Corinth. Titus is mentioned eight times in II Corinthians. He had been sent to Corinth to deal with the immorality that seemed to be pernicious in Corinth and its manifestation in the Corinthian Church. He was at least relatively successful, because Paul wrote that Titus was able to return to Paul with Joy, his spirit being refreshed by the Corinthians (II Corinthians 7:13-15). Titus also seems to have assisted in the collection of the special offering for the Jerusalem saints that Paul was gathering from among the Gentile churches (I Corinthians 16:12 compared with II Corinthians 8:6).

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<sup>22</sup> Acts 15:2

<sup>23</sup> Although Paul's statement in the Galatian Epistle would lead one to conclude that the initiative for the trip came exclusively from Paul and that Paul chose the members of the delegation, Acts 15 gives a fuller picture. Evidently, Paul's statements in Galatians 2 were made in the manner that they were made in order to make the point that the Gentile Titus was not compelled to be circumcised by the Jerusalem council, whereas Luke's historical record in Acts gives the fuller picture, which is enhanced by Paul's statements in Galatians.

<sup>24</sup> Titus 1:4

Later, when more problems manifested in Corinth, Titus once again was sent to Corinth, carrying a letter (II Corinthians 2:3ff; 7:8ff). That letter has not been preserved for us. When Titus once again brought a good report from Corinth to Paul, the apostle wrote another letter, the one we know as II Corinthians; Titus also delivered that letter.

From these passages it is clear that Titus, rather than Paul, was the person chiefly responsible for straightening out the many-faceted problems in Corinth.

After Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, he made a number of missionary trips. Titus was with him when he visited Crete, resulting in many conversions. Paul had to travel on, but he left Titus in Crete to ordain elders and to put the church in order. The Epistle to Titus contained Paul's instructions to Titus, concerning this important role.

Although the details in the biblical record are scanty, it seems that Paul sometimes sent Titus into difficult situations without an accompanying team. When we consider the sensitive and difficult tasks that Paul assigned to Titus, we conclude that he was a mature believer, strong in his faith and naturally stable. Only a man of strong faith, strength of character, and stable emotions could have succeeded in the tasks to which Titus was assigned.

We do not have any information describing Paul and Titus' time together, nor what they did together, with the exception of Titus' role in Crete. Thus it would be a stretch of the imagination and reading into the text what isn't there, to conclude that Paul trained or mentored Titus. We just don't know.

### **Paul and Timothy**

As we examine the list of Paul's associates, looking for one who fits the trainer/trainee, mentor/student, relationship, Timothy becomes the most likely candidate. First, some relevant background on Timothy.

Of all of the places that Paul visited in his many missionary endeavors, the mountain village of Lystra probably was the most rural and uncultured. Lystra was located in southern Galatia, in the province of Lycaonia (λυκαονία). Although Iconium and Lystra were only about eighteen miles apart, they were in different provinces. Lystra was in Lycaonia, whereas Iconium was in the province of Phrygia. Both towns were populated by members of the Lycaonian race who spoke Greek in public but used the Lycaonian dialect in their homes.

In an earlier time, Lystra had been a rather significant city. About 250 years before Timothy was born, Antiochus III, the sixth ruler of the Seleucid Empire, removed

2000 Jewish families from Babylon and settled them in the Anatolian Region.<sup>25</sup> That is why Paul and his companions found Jewish synagogues in most of the cities of this area. Antiochus was a friend of the Jews and he gave them favored citizen status – exempting them from certain taxes. They soon became the leaders in commerce and finance throughout the region. Needless to say, this did not sit well with the natives of the region and so there always was some ongoing resentment, especially in the rural frontier towns.

Antiochus III's son, Antiochus Epiphany, had a dislike for Jews and became their enemy. For this reason, the status of Jews throughout the empire was downgraded.

In 6 BC, the Roman Emperor Augustus, perturbed by the unruly nature of the Lycaonian natives, declared the frontier town of Lystra a Roman colony. He established a garrison of Roman soldiers there, and also brought in Greek merchants to try to civilize the area. Augustus made the Greeks the VIPs of Lystra. Once again, the natives of the area resented the intruders that a distant ruler was imposing on them. Over the years, the Romans lost interest in Lystra and the town went downhill, even though the Roman Garrison remained in Lystra.

Lystra folklore contained the story of a time when the father of the Gods, Zeus, and his spokesman/messenger, Hermes,<sup>26</sup> visited the town but no one recognized them as gods and no one offered them a place to stay. The only exception was an old peasant couple, Philemon and his wife Baucis. The aged couple took the gods into their home and were kind to them. As a result of the town's affront to the gods, Zeus wiped out the entire population, with the exception of Philemon and Baucis. The couple was made the guardians of a splendid temple. When the aged couple died, they were turned into two great trees. Outside of the gates of Lystra, stood the impressive Temple of Zeus, and two trees grew near the entrance. This legend is why Barnabas and Paul were worshipped as Zeus and Hermes, when they visited Lystra and healed the lame man. The Lystrans didn't want to make the same mistake twice.

In every town that the missionaries visited on their first tour, they found a Jewish synagogue and that is the place where they first went with their message. Lystra was the lone exception; Lystra did not have a synagogue. The absence of a synagogue indicated that there were less than ten Jewish families left in Lystra (when ten Jewish families lived in a town, a synagogue was convened).

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<sup>25</sup> Anatolia was the region that Barnabas and Paul visited on their first missionary journey. It included southern Galatia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, and Pisidia.

<sup>26</sup> The Latin names for these two gods are Jupiter and Mercury

After first being received as gods, Paul and Barnabas became the object of attack, when trouble makers from Antioch and Iconium arrived. Paul was stoned and left for dead. Even so, during their brief state in Lystra, some of the citizens became disciples and a church was formed.<sup>27</sup>

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas began visiting the churches that had been born out his and Barnabas' first missionary journey. More than two years (possibly three) had passed since that inaugural visit to Lystra.<sup>28</sup> The church that had been born out of that visit had grown, as had the churches in nearby Derby and Iconium. When Paul and Silas arrived in Lystra they found a church being led by the elders that Paul and Barnabas had installed two years previously.<sup>29</sup>

There was a certain disciple in the Lystran Church, named, Timothy. Timothy was highly regarded, not only by the church in his hometown, Lystra, but also by the church in nearby Iconium. We do not know Timothy's age, but he was old enough to have gained the respect and a reputation beyond his hometown.<sup>30</sup>

Timothy's father was Greek, probably one of those who had been brought to Lystra by Augustus. Most Greeks, feeling that the Gods had abandoned them, had abandoned the Gods. Greeks spent their time philosophizing, rather than worshipping. Whether or not Timothy's father was a religious man we do not know, but we do know that he was not a convert to Judaism, else his son would have been circumcised. It also is possible that Timothy's father was dead and the boy's mother, Eunice, was a widow, rearing her son with the aid of her mother Lois.<sup>31</sup> Whatever the situation might have been, Timothy's mother and grandmother were steeped in Scripture and they imparted that knowledge to the boy.<sup>32</sup>

What was it like for Timothy to grow up in Lystra? He was neither a full-blood Jew nor a full-blood Greek, and he was growing up a community that probably didn't care for Jews or Greeks. We wonder if he felt that he was an "outsider." I question the view that Timothy was a shy, fuzzy cheeked, timid, mama's boy, whose health was fragile, and humanly ill-fitted for the role of apprentice with an apostle. This caricature may have some truth in it, but it contains much speculation, and usually the caricature is the ploy for a point the writer wants to make.

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<sup>27</sup> Acts 14:19-23

<sup>28</sup> Acts 14:5ff

<sup>29</sup> Acts 14:21-23

<sup>30</sup> Acts 16:2

<sup>31</sup> II Timothy 1:5

<sup>32</sup> II Timothy 3:14-15

Beyond question, at least during a portion of his life Timothy did have physical problems, because Paul urged him to drink wine for the benefit of his stomach and other ailments.<sup>33</sup> We also know that Timothy was a young man because Paul exhorted him to not allow people to look down on him because of his youth, but rather to be an example before them.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, to picture Timothy as a shy, timid youth, because Paul exhorted him to fight the good fight of faith;<sup>35</sup> or Paul's writing to Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of timidity but rather of power, and love, and discipline;<sup>36</sup> overlooks the other reminders that Paul wrote to Timothy, i.e., that a man of God is not one who strives and quarrels with people, but is patient, kind and meek.<sup>37</sup> Paul exhorted Timothy to be aggressive on one hand but on the other hand he exhorted him to be patient, kind, and meek. Which of these defines the temperament of Timothy? I doubt that either of these describes Timothy's temperament. They are among the many, many, instructions and guidance that the aged apostle wrote as reminders and encouragement to his young delegate.

Even as Jesus chose the Twelve, Paul chose Timothy,<sup>38</sup> and Timothy accepted the invitation to travel with Paul and Silas. Knowing that they would be speaking to Jews, and not wanting any barrier between the missionary team and those whom they sought to reach, Paul circumcised Timothy.<sup>39</sup> As the team prepared to leave Lystra, Paul and the elders laid hands on Timothy, prophecies were given concerning Timothy's role, and even spiritual equipping was imparted.<sup>40</sup>

Timothy's training began as the three man team, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, visited a number of churches that had been birthed as a result of the Paul and Barnabas missionary tour two or three years earlier. Their first mission was to deliver the decrees of the Jerusalem council,<sup>41</sup> but they also strengthened the churches by their

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<sup>33</sup> I Timothy 5:23 The verse says, literally, *be no longer a water-drinker, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses*. The implication is that Timothy was restricting his beverage to water – he was a *water-drinker*, and Paul was telling him that such abstinence from wine was not a healthy thing to do.

<sup>34</sup> I Timothy 4:12

<sup>35</sup> I Timothy 6:12

<sup>36</sup> II Timothy 1:7

<sup>37</sup> II Timothy 2:23ff

<sup>38</sup> Acts 16:3

<sup>39</sup> Since Paul continually argued that circumcision had no merit in the kingdom, this act clearly was one of expediency in order to remove any possible barrier that might interfere with their reaching the Jews (I Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; I Corinthians 9:20ff)

<sup>40</sup> I Timothy 1:18; 4:14; II Timothy 1:6)

<sup>41</sup> Acts 15:22-30; 16:4

visit and also would have preached the Gospel as they had opportunity.<sup>42</sup> One thing that Timothy was learning was that apostolic ministry with Paul involved a lot of walking.

Paul seems always to have been a planner and so his intention was to turn directly west, after completing the tour of the existing churches. His goal was the major cities in Asia.<sup>43</sup> The region known as Asia had a population of about 4.6 million, and contained 500 cities, the largest being Ephesus, which had a population of 500,000 people. Smyrna and Pergamum each had a population of 200,000. Yet, these plans had to be abandoned because they were *forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia*.<sup>44</sup> So, they set their sights on Bithynia, but *the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them*.<sup>45</sup> So, they walked straight west and ended up at Troas. By this time they would have walked about 250 miles, sometimes traversing mountainous terrain, not sure where they were going, and being forbidden to preach the Gospel.

Scripture does not tell us how God forbade their preaching in these places. Since Silas was a prophet, it is possible that the word was given prophetically, through Silas. We just don't know how the directions were given. Yet, this we do know: Timothy was getting training in making plans, but he also was getting training in hearing from God and scuttling the plans. He was learning that God's will, not plans, must be the authority in ministry. He also was learning that at times God may even forbid someone to preach. It would seem that God has a timing concerning when any people group or region is to receive the Gospel. Rather than trying to figure it all out, Timothy was learning to hear from God.

When they halted in Troas, they were near the site of ancient Troy. Troas was a seaport with all of the elements that attend seaports. In front of them loomed the Aegean Sea. The team faced three options: (1) sit it out at Troas, possibly preaching there; (2) turn around and walk back to Antioch, possibly dropping off Timothy in Lystra; (3) head west across the sea. What they did do was do nothing until they received direction from God and that came in a night vision, possibly a dream.

*A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*<sup>10</sup> When he

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<sup>42</sup> Acts 16:5

<sup>43</sup> The term, "Asia," in Paul's day referred chiefly to the area that we know as Asia Minor. However, there was a province known as Asia, whose capital was Ephesus.

<sup>44</sup> Acts 16:6

<sup>45</sup> Acts 16:7

*had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:9-10)*

From the change of pronouns in Acts 16, from “they” (verse 8) to “we,” (verse 10) it is a natural assumption that Luke, the author of Acts, had joined the team in Troas.

Timothy probably had not been more than 30 miles from home, before he began traveling with Paul and Silas. Here he was facing his first ocean voyage. They sailed to Philippi, a Roman colony, and one of the chief cities of Macedonia. They arrived at the seaport of Neapolis and walked the ten miles inland to Philippi. When they arrived, no heavenly direction was given to them. Also, there was no synagogue, the launch pad that Paul usually sought out to begin the proclamation of the Gospel in a new locality. At this point, they used reason. It was the custom of Jews of the dispersion to conduct Sabbath worship at a riverside, when they did not have a synagogue. The Gangites River was about one mile west of the city and so on the Sabbath, that is where the quartet headed.<sup>46</sup> This also would be a convenient spot to preach because converts could be immersed in the Gangites. Indeed on the riverbank they encountered Jewish worshippers, but they were all women. Paul preached, and at least one woman and her household had their hearts opened by the Lord.<sup>47</sup> Lydia and her household were immersed into Christ and the beginning of a church at Philippi was underway.<sup>48</sup>

In this situation, Timothy had learned the place of reason, i.e., where would one find worshippers on a Sabbath? Reason and experience said on a riverbank. He also learned that one should not have a preconceived notion of to whom one should preach – rather than a gathering of men, it might be a group of women on a riverbank.

Here, as elsewhere, Timothy saw modeled the Holy Spirit-given plan of salvation: preach the word and immerse in water those who responded in faith and repentance, exactly as Jesus had commanded in the Great Commission.<sup>49</sup> Every place that Paul preached and there were converts, this was the pattern set before Timothy. Also, Timothy continually learned that preaching does not guarantee converts – it is God who opens the hearer’s heart to receive the message.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Acts 16:13

<sup>47</sup> Acts 16:14

<sup>48</sup> Acts 16:15

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>50</sup> Acts 16:14

Timothy witnessed the casting out of the demon from the slave girl and the consequent arrest, beating, and jailing of Silas and Paul.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, Luke and Timothy were spared this experience. From this experience, Timothy had reinforced the truth that *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* (2 Timothy 3:12). Ministry does not make one exempt from attack, persecution, and suffering.

He also learned how to face hardship *But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;* (Acts 16:25)

The team spent a total of three months in Philippi. Timothy had seen a church established with an odd assortment of members – some women, a former demon possessed slave girl and a jailer, plus families associated with these. From this humble beginning came one of the stellar churches of the First Century as well as the church that seemed to care most intensely for Paul’s well-being throughout the rest of his life.

Luke remained behind in Philippi, but Paul, Silas, and Timothy, headed south to Thessalonica.<sup>52</sup> God had called Paul and the team to evangelize Macedonia and the best way to do that was to evangelize the largest city of the region – Thessalonica, which also was the capitol of Macedonia. The city had about 200,000 residents and it was the crossroads of the region. It was a very busy place, with caravans moving in and out, traveling east and west, north and south. There was a large synagogue in Thessalonica and as a qualified rabbi, Paul was received as a teacher. After three Sabbaths in the synagogue, many of Paul’s audience became converts, including some leading women of the city. One of the converts, Jason, invited the apostolic team to stay with him.

The Jewish leaders became jealous of Paul’s success and the popularity of the apostolic team. The synagogue leaders went to the market place, gathered up a mob of unruly people, and went to Jason’s house to find Paul and his companions, but they were not home. In frustration they dragged Jason and some of the believers before the authorities. A pledge was required of Jason and the Christians (evidently a pledge that they would not do anything that might cause a riot).

The team had to leave Thessalonica and go to the next town, small and insignificant Berea. In Berea they found a synagogue, whose constituency took seriously the teaching of Paul and examined the Scriptures – chapter and verse, so to speak – to check out whether or not Paul’s teaching was an accurate exposition

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<sup>51</sup> Acts 16:16-23

<sup>52</sup> Acts 17:1ff

or a distortion of the word. This is something that had not been done by the Thessalonians.<sup>53</sup>

Agitators from Thessalonica showed up in Berea and Paul had to leave that city. He left Timothy and Silas behind with instructions for them to go back to Thessalonica to see how things were going. Paul ended up in Athens and then moved on to Corinth. After a few weeks in Corinth, Timothy and Silas arrived and reported on the situations in Thessalonica and Berea. The report on Thessalonica was not good. Peterson describes the Thessalonians of this period in this fashion,

“As the old Gospel chorus goes, ‘They had the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in their hearts....They had the love of Jesus, love of Jesus, down in their hearts,’ but they didn’t have the Word of God down in their hearts.” They were not tied to the Scriptures as the Bereans had been.”<sup>54</sup>

Paul knew that he could not return to Thessalonica. Timothy had been traveling with Paul and Silas for about one year and Paul now was ready to assign to Timothy his first solo responsibility. He sent Silas back to Berea and then on to Philippi. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica.

Timothy’s job in Thessalonica was to examine the situation, trying to identify problems and their source, but also to strengthen the church. The main problem that Timothy observed in Thessalonica was the persecution and pressure that the church faced. Especially severe was the persecution by the Jewish establishment. There also were theological aberrations which Timothy sought to correct, based on the theological teaching that he had received from Paul.

Timothy seems to have done well at Thessalonica. However, there was one theological question that he could not resolve and that dealt with the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. When he returned to Paul, this question was presented to the apostle, and so Paul wrote a letter to the Thessalonians, explaining the future scenario. Timothy delivered the letter.

Thessalonica once again reinforced in Timothy the lesson that Christians are not exempt from suffering and persecution. He also learned that when one faces a theological question that he cannot answer, he should not fake it, but admit it and seek an answer from someone qualified to supply that answer. From that time forward, Timothy was qualified to teach the doctrine of the Second Coming and the resurrection of the saints.

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<sup>53</sup> Acts 17:11

<sup>54</sup> William J. Peterson, *The Discipling of Timothy* (Wheaton, Victor Books) 1980, page 89

Timothy's next assignment was to try to bring some resolution to the problems in Corinth. He failed. As noted earlier, Paul had to send Silas on repeated trips to Corinth. Out of this experience Timothy learned two things:

1. Even the most earnest and dedicated servant can fail to achieve the desired results, whereas someone else might succeed in that same arena.
2. Failure does not mean that one is forever ruined.

This failure was an important part of Timothy's seasoning.

We leap far ahead in the narrative for the next chapter in Timothy's internship. Timothy and others had been commissioned to accompany to Jerusalem the offering from the Gentile churches that Paul had been raising for the Jerusalem Church. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they deposited the offering with the leaders of the church. Shortly thereafter, Paul was arrested, and then he was transferred to the prison in Caesarea.

Timothy and the others accompanied Paul to Caesarea, but when it appeared that his imprisonment was going to be longstanding, most of the delegates went back home to report that they had fulfilled their mission. They spread the news that Paul was in prison and generated much prayer for the imprisoned apostle.

Two of the delegates remained with Paul at the Caesarean prison and accompanied him when he was taken to Rome: Dr. Luke, representing Philippi, and Aristarchus, representing Thessalonica.<sup>55</sup> What about Timothy? Scripture is silent, concerning Timothy's immediate activity during this period, but three years later he was in Rome and serving as Paul's secretary.<sup>56</sup>

Paul was released from prison and not surprisingly, he quickly embarked on a tour of the churches. Both Timothy and Titus accompanied him on part of this tour.<sup>57</sup> When Paul visited Ephesus, even though the church seemed strong, there were deep problems. Paul needed to travel to Macedonia, so he left Timothy behind to deal with the situation. By this time, Timothy had been Paul's companion for about fifteen years. He had become a seasoned veteran.

A chief problem at Ephesus was heterodox teaching. Paul wrote to Timothy, giving encouragement and instruction, reminding him that the main reason that he

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<sup>55</sup> Acts 27:2

<sup>56</sup> Timothy earlier had been the scribe who penned II Corinthians. Now, it seems that he became Paul's scribe in Rome. Three of the prison epistles, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, have Timothy's name attached to them. Only Ephesians does not mention Timothy and it is of a totally different literary style than the other three.

<sup>57</sup> As noted earlier, Paul left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:1ff)

left him in Ephesus was to deal with the false doctrines that were cropping up in Ephesus.

*As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, (1 Timothy 1:3)*

Timothy also was commissioned to bring forth new stable leadership and Paul spelled out the qualifications for elders and deacons.<sup>58</sup> By writing this letter to Timothy, Paul gave to Timothy a tool that he could use in doing his work. Paul began the letter by asserting his apostleship.<sup>59</sup> If he needed to do so, Timothy could show the letter to church leaders and say, “see, this is what the apostle says.”

There is no need to continue the narrative, other than to state that Timothy, traveling with Paul, Silas, and Luke, learned both by experience and by instruction,<sup>60</sup> the things needed to equip him for the role of bringing correction and encouragement to churches. In some situations, as Paul’s apostolic delegate, Timothy was the representation of apostolic authority.

What can we learn from the lesson of Paul and Timothy? Many of the same things that we learned from the pattern that Jesus set forth:

1. Timothy did not choose Paul, but Paul chose Timothy (even as Jesus had said to His apostles, *you did not choose me, but I chose you*)
2. Timothy had a background in the Scriptures, a foundation of understanding upon which could be built the fuller understanding of truths concerning the Christ and the Kingdom of God.
3. Timothy already was a disciple, a learner, when Paul chose him.
4. Everything that the senior members of the team experienced, the intern, Timothy, experienced - sometimes as an observer and sometimes as a participant.
5. Timothy learned obedience. Barclay likens Timothy to a postage stamp. “The postage stamp sticks to its job. It is stuck on the envelope and there it stays until it has reached its destination...the postage stamp goes where it is sent. Stick it on the envelope and it will go to Edinburgh, or London, to Paris...It did not matter to Timothy where he was sent. He went.”<sup>61</sup>
6. Paul imparted to Timothy the orthodox doctrines that he would need to combat the false doctrines that were cropping up in churches.

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<sup>58</sup> I Timothy 3:1ff

<sup>59</sup> I Timothy 1:1

<sup>60</sup> II Timothy 1:13; 4:2-4; etc.

<sup>61</sup> William Barclay, *God’s Young Church*, (Edinburgh, The Saint Andrews Press) page 105

7. Paul and the other senior members of the team modeled for Timothy the importance of hearing from God.
8. Timothy was formed, in character, knowledge, and wisdom in handling difficult situations by spending night and day with his mentors. Much was imparted that cannot be reduced to any defining terms. It was life imparted through osmosis.

### **Conclusion**

In the record of Jesus' training and apprenticing the Twelve, as well as the mentoring example of Barnabas and Saul, and the example of Paul and Timothy, we see a rather consistent model for training and developing ministries in the Church. Certainly, the culture of the times, the rather extreme and specific nature of their ministries and the goals thereof, and the life situations of these men, do not apply to most of present day mentors and interns. Therefore, we must not be legalistic in trying to walk lockstep with Jesus, Paul, and Barnabas. However, the principles and patterns displayed in these models are ageless.