

All Honor to the King- Discipleship

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Introduction:

Three issues are presented in this discussion:

1. The need for effective discipleship.
2. A discussion of Biblical discipleship and philosophies of the Discipleship Meditation System Handbook.
3. Goals and evidence of effective discipleship.

Section 1, The Need for Effective Discipleship:

When God reveals Himself to an individual and His Spirit enters and brings new life, they are born again. However, He does not destroy the desires of lust-of-the-eyes, lust-of-the-flesh, or pride-of-life (1 John 2:16). If He did, Believers would lose the opportunity to demonstrate love to Him by crucifying their selfish wants, desires, and passions. If motives are correct, the greater the cost of a sacrifice the greater the expression of love, so when these strong desires are offered as personal sacrifices, they express love to God.

With a new spirit and the old lower nature, a war exists within every Believer. The battles of these wars appear in many forms and some Believers are able to have victory more quickly than others. God understands these challenges and He gives grace and mercy, and He has commissioned discipleship. It is proposed that the goal of discipleship is for mentors to guide fellow Believers to develop spiritual maturity.

Discipleship is very important as it was the last verbal command from the Lord Jesus Christ:

[Matthew 28:18-20](#) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

Regardless of the reasons, the modern American Church (about 1890 to present) turned away from discipleship. During these years there has been a tremendous increase in many moral compromises and open sins. There is also evidence that many Christians do not fear God and do not truly hold His Word to be authoritative.

Despite the authority of the command to disciple the nations, discipleship is often only a buzzword as it is often redefined. Today, discipleship has been neglected for so many generations, there are questions if vary many Church leaders have been effectively disciplined themselves. Therefore, it is proposed that the cause and the solution for many of these failures is for the modern Church to embrace effective discipleship and make it a very high priority.

This discussion proposes principles and philosophies of Biblical Discipleship and how they are incorporated into the [Discipleship Meditation System \(DMS\)- A Handbook of Mentors](#). The Handbook is designed for Disciples to memorize, review, meditate on, and obey. Goals, questions, and challenges are also presented in the Handbook.

Furthermore, God appoints parents, Church leaders, and mature Disciples to mentor Believers. Family discipleship has been a significant weakness within the modern Church so 7 challenges to disciple children are presented in [Challenges to Disciple Children](#).

Section 2, A proposed definition of Biblical Discipleship:

The ultimate measure of spiritual maturity is love for God and man (the Great Commandment: Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:28). How is it possible to help and guide Believers to become the essence of love and the image of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is proposed that the Apostle Paul answered these questions when he expressed to Timothy that the goal of his teaching was to guide Believers to genuinely love God with their whole hearts, souls, and minds. Paul declares that genuine love is built on three critical foundations:

I Timothy 1:5 "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith"

(Note: These are uncelebrated truths but Paul uses them as the foundation in many of his letters to the early Churches. Careful inspection of the books of Romans and Ephesians will support the claim that sincere faith, a pure heart, and a clear conscience are the foundation of genuine love.)

- Sincere faith:

Being born again with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the foundation of sincere faith. Therefore, an early stage in discipleship must be to help individuals verify within their hearts that they are only trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Reliance on any works or achievements reveals that they are clinging to their pride-of-life, instead of embracing God's unconditional love.

Ultimately God must reveal Himself to every Believer but God's Word is active and sharp. Module A in the Handbook includes basic Gospel verses that have been selected to generate and strengthen Sincere Faith through memorization, consistent review, and effective meditation. Further discussion can be found in the Handbook on each of these activities.

Through God's Word and guidance from mentors, as new Believers begin to grasp the holiness and glory of God, the sinfulness of their nature, and the tremendous price that God made for them, they begin to be gripped by His love. New Believers usually must embrace God's love by *faith* but as they understand the deep truths of the Gospel, God's love will begin to grip them. And, when they are embraced by His love, they receive tremendous transforming power. These truths are foundational for mentoring new Believers to develop sincere faith.

And when God allows trials and suffering, sincere faith is necessary for Believers to understand that He causes all things to work together for the good of His Children. And to be thankful that short-term challenges are inconsequential compared to the relationships that they will enjoy with Him for eternity.

A second major element of Sincere Faith is for Believers to understand their new *identities* before God. The verses in Module B are selected to help Believers meditate on, understand, and incorporate their identity in the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts and minds. This module is also designed to help meet the third challenge of discipling children.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**, just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. **In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself**, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, **which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved**.

Therefore, an essential goal of discipling Believers is to help them understand and embrace their identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. That God has chosen them to be adopted as sons of God and He has given them every spiritual blessing. These and other gifts reflect God's love for His children. It is significant to note the past tense of these statements.

Ephesians 1:7-10 **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to **the riches of His grace** which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight **He made known to us the mystery of His will**, according to **His kind intention which He purposed in Him** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

God is Holy so for Believers to have a relationship with Him, it is necessary for them to be covered with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. These statements, "Redemption through His Blood", "forgiveness of our trespasses", and "according to the riches of His grace", all affirm that believers are covered with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. An important element of the identity of Believers is to fully grasp that God views them with the same righteousness that He views the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:11-14 **In Him also we have obtained an inheritance**, having been **predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will**, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to **the praise of His glory**. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise**, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of **God's own possession, to the praise of His glory**.

Experience has shown that to the extent that Believers embrace their identities with the Lord Jesus Christ their lives are transformed, allowing them to crucify their pride-of-life and begin reflecting the image of

the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers with weak identities have often become bitter when faced with trials. Therefore, being gripped by God's love and embracing their true identities must be important goals of discipling Believers to develop Sincere Faith.

The verses, questions, and challenges in Modules A and B of the Handbook are designed to help mentors guide Believers to develop Sincere Faith and to meet challenges 1 (Sincere Faith) and 3 (Identity) of the "[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)". In addition, Module A is vital to empower Believers to effectively share the Gospel.

-Pure heart

It is proposed that Pure Hearts are critical for effective discipleship and that two vital elements are necessary for guiding and encouraging Believers to develop Pure Hearts.

The first element, the foundation of a Pure Heart is for Believers to humbly bow to Jesus Christ as Lord. In light of Romans 10:9-10, this should seem obvious but the temptation for many has been to "confess Jesus as Lord", intellectually or through the power of their self-will. They outwardly appear to be obedient Christians but motivated by pride-of-life they don't sincerely surrender control, denying Jesus Christ from being the Lord of their life. If not appropriately addressed, a high percentage of younger children reject their faith when they get older. Without this critical anchor, some older Christians have rejected their faith, even after decades of what appeared to be a "successful" ministry.

When individuals refuse to humbly bow before the Lord Jesus Christ, they remain under a yoke of slavery, constantly needing to earn God's approval and acceptance. Under a cruel taskmaster, when they fail, guilt leads them to self-loathing, anger, bitterness, and sometimes hopelessness, often leading them to reject their faith. Regardless of how successful a Christian may appear if Jesus Christ is not truly their Lord, it is critical for them to determine the genuineness of their salvation, (see Matthew 7:22-23). Furthermore, without the power of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, their motives for having a Pure Heart are questionable. Therefore, mentors must discern, guide, and encourage Believers to submit every area of their lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

If the driving force is to gain recognition from men, mentors, parents, or even God, such motives are fed by pride-of-life and lust-of-the-eyes which are in opposition and destroy a Pure Hearts. Not only is it important for Believers to bow to Jesus Christ as Lord but reflecting God's love back to Him is the only appropriate motive. Thus the development of Sincere Faith and Pure Hearts are intimately woven together.

This does not mean that Believers who bow to Jesus Christ as Lord will be perfect. God continues the good work He starts within every Believer but effective mentors are important to encourage, guide, and challenge Believers to die to their selfish wants and desires. Thus streamlining the development of Pure Hearts. Therefore, a key objective for discipling Believers is to evaluate, encourage, and challenge them to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, motivated by reflecting God's unconditional love back to Him.

The second element of a Pure Heart is for Believers to have an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A Pure Heart is the “engine” for Godly living but the fuel to power the engine comes from a close friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ. As Believers spend time in God’s Word and talk with Him, asking questions, making requests, and expressing appreciation for His love, two-way conversations develop. God responds with prompting and insights into His Word, various thoughts, ideas, and challenges. As these conversations grow into a *constant awareness of God’s presence*, an abiding friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ develops.

The greater the awareness of the Lord Jesus Christ’s presence is in the life of Believers, the greater their ability will be to resist temptation. When temptation appears, they have the choice to ignore it or to continue to dwell on it, and then possibly pursue it. However, when Believers are tempted and make wrong choices in His presence, there are several possible responses. Sometimes He expresses sadness. Sometimes He shouts warnings. Sometimes He just looks and doesn’t say anything. When Believers are in His presence, they learn that it is just a matter of time before they will not be able to ignore Him. And the longer temptation is allowed, the more painful the relationship will be. And if temptation is dwelt on long enough, it will lead to sin, which carries many consequences. So, when there are failures, it is much easier for Believers to confess and repent (claiming 1 John 1:9) when they are aware of His loving presence. (Appendix C describes some mental disciplines to help address tougher temptations.)

Sin is always destructive but when Believers repent and experience God’s forgiveness, those in His presence have a deeper understanding of His love and over time, they begin to be embraced by God’s unconditional love. It is God’s goal for Believers to develop a close relationship with Him so He allows and possibly even designs trials for His Children. He is more concerned with developing Godly character that will last for eternity than with the short-term happiness of His Children. Therefore, mentors (especially parents) must work to help Believers not only overcome trials but to view them from God’s perspective and to be thankful for them (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

The foundation of Pure Hearts is submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, motivated by genuine love. The power from Pure Hearts comes from abiding relationships with Him. And the result of Pure Hearts is expressions of love to God, being living sacrifices (Galatians 2:20), and demonstrating true worship (Romans 12:2).

Module C in the Handbook addresses Lordship, purity, and becoming living sacrifices. These are important elements of developing a Pure Heart and will help meet the 2nd challenge in the “[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)” (A Pure Heart). Module E in the Handbook is designed to help build closer friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: God has designed marriage to be a model between the relationship of His Children and the Lord Jesus Christ. The close relationships within marriage present challenges to help identify and address selfishness and pride-of-life issues. Therefore, marriage is a valuable tool to promote the qualities of discipleship and Pure Hearts. Appendix B further discusses important elements of marriage.

-Clear Conscience:

When Believers respond to the Gospel, are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, embrace Sincere Faith, submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, and begin developing a Pure Heart, they receive the ability and the power to maintain a Clear Conscience.

Simplistically, a Clear Conscience is a result of doing right and avoiding wrong, but what is Paul referring to? The term "Clear Conscience" is not specifically defined in scripture, so it is proposed that each of the following aspects are key to maintaining a Clear Conscience:

1. To die to self (Galatians 2:20), the path to developing Christ-like character and being transformed into His image. A Clear Conscience is intimately related to having Sincere Faith and a Pure Heart.
2. To know God, resulting in the fear of the Lord, producing wisdom. The 4th challenge in "[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)".
3. Wisdom allows the ability to transform the mind, discern good and evil, illuminate paths to be salt and light, and to be faithful Representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. Challenges 5 and 6 of the "[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)".

The first proposed area is for Believers to develop Christ-like character and be transformed into His image. Over time, Believers who bow to the authority of Jesus Christ, maintaining a pure heart develop Godly Character (and a Clear Conscience). Both a Pure Heart and a Clear Conscience are dependent on Believers dying to themselves.

[Luke 9:23](#) And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

To take up "his cross" requires the sacrifice of their selfish desires, daily, hourly, and even moment-by-moment. All Believers must overcome the challenges below but mentors may need to guide and encourage disciples-in-training to focus on specific areas of weaknesses.

Pride-of-life:

- To be convinced and bow to God's Word as the ultimate source of truth.
- The discipline of scripture memory, review, and meditation.
- Serve, forgive, and love others (Philippians 2:20,21).
- Appropriately submit to authorities (parents, etc.).
- Committed to rightly knowing and handling truth.
- Submit time, energy, and money to God (giving, sabbath).
- To be faithful Representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ (Prophet, Priest, and King).

Lust of the eyes:

- Crucify desires of appearances and reputations.
- Boldness to share the Gospel.
- Disciplined life, putting away laziness and greed.

- Commitment to promoting integrity, honesty, and truthfulness.
- To embrace the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lust of the Flesh:

- Commitment to maintaining personal purity (Proverbs 4:23).
- Proper diet, exercise, fasting.
- Sacrifice self-indulgent appetites, Drugs, alcohol, and lifestyles.
- Sacrifice lusts for power and control.
- Humbly embrace the Righteous of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As there is victory in these and possibly other areas, Believers will develop Christ-like character and demonstrate His image. Also, as Believers become living sacrifices, offering acceptable worship to God (Romans 12:1), they meet the sixth challenge of discipling children (Worship).

The second area of a Clear Conscience is to know God. Module D presents the character and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spending time in God’s Word, with Him in prayer reveals a deeper understanding of who God is, His character, His holiness, His power, and His love. But the goal should never be to develop academic knowledge or to hold to forms of Godliness. As Believers know Him, they develop respect for God and an appropriate fear of the Lord.

[Psalms 1:1,2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.](#)

Obedience through discipline alone is burdensome, feeds the pride-of-life, and only changes outward appearances (such as the Pharisees). However, obedience motivated by love and abiding with the Lord Jesus Christ (a Pure Heart) strengthens respect for God and His Word. As Believers begin to understand and know God, God’s intent is revealed to them and they gain wisdom, delighting in His laws and standards. Not only “a delight” but their joy in the Lord strengthens a Clear Conscience.

Module D. to know the Lord Jesus Christ is also helpful to meet the 4th challenge, in the “[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)”, and to gain wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

The third area of developing a clear conscience is not being conformed to the world but being transformed by a renewed mind.

[Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.](#)

A solid grasp of the truths of God's Word is necessary to renew the mind. Thus, the emphasis of the Handbook is on memorizing, consistent review, and the meditation of God’s Word. However, knowledge puffs up and feeds pride-of-life so all Biblical knowledge must be approached with sincere faith and a pure heart.

Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who **because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.**

Because of the deceitfulness of the heart, an important aspect of renewing the mind is to develop discernment of good and evil.

A renewed mind and effective training to discern good and evil will result in the development of a solid Biblical value system, leading to paths to be salt and light. Ultimately, Believers will understand God's purpose for them to minister as His Representatives (see, [Representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ](#)).

Section 3, Evidence of Effective Discipleship:

Module F of the Handbook presents qualities that are necessary to reflect God's love to the World. When the foundational truths of sincere faith, a pure heart, and a clear conscience are integrated into the life of Believers, they possess the power to love God with all of their hearts, souls, and minds, and to genuinely love others.

However, the challenge for parents and mentors is that the pride-of-life, a root of sin, often motivates individuals to strive for accomplishments that give them the appearance of genuinely loving God and others. The lower nature of man is so deceitful and desperately wicked, it is possible for "Christians" to have tremendous accomplishments, and yet they may not even be born again (Matthew 7:21-23). Therefore, it is critical that every Christian accurately evaluate their relationship with God. Thus, the Apostle John provided attributes to allow Believers to have confidence in their relationship with God.

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

The first evidence is walking in the light.

1 John 1:6,7 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Some no doubt falsely claim to walk in the light and have fellowship with God. However, those who do not practice the truth do not have genuine fellowship with Believers. For justification, friendship is often claimed but it is "counterfeit fellowship".

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Several characteristics of friendships are similar to fellowship but friendship and fellowship are not equal. Solid friendships are built on good character qualities, such as faithfulness, dependability, loyalty, etc. These qualities should also be reflected in fellowship but fellowship forms brother/ sister type relationships. Surprisingly, many non-believers have high levels of integrity and often have stronger

friendships than some Christians. Friendships and fellowship should never be confused and there should be considerable concern if a Believer does not walk in fellowship.

Walking in the light does not mean sinless perfection, but humble dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ from sincere faith, a pure heart, and a clear conscience. Because of deep respect for God and the authority of His Word, there is tremendous harmony of critical Biblical truths between Believers who walk in the light together. However, there may be considerable differences in perspectives on secondary issues that may involve lively debates, but because of love and respect, there is generally an atmosphere of harmony and deference. So, even the characteristics of disagreements are generally different between friend and fellowship relationships.

Another major difference is that fellowship-based communities are inclusive while friendship-based communities tend to be cliquish and exclusive.

(Appendix A describes the qualities of some who walk in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.)

1 John 2:4-6 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.**

Another evidence of walking in the light is a deep respect for God and the authority of God’s Word. Again, the deceitfulness of the heart allows those who do not walk in the light to profess to believe God’s Word to be absolute truth, but they take exception when God’s standards are inconvenient. In such cases, their pride-of-life motivates them to usurp God’s authority, redefining Biblical Truths according to their desires. “Keeping” God’s Word requires attitudes of total respect, not just strict accountings of does and don’ts.

John 2:15,16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Another evidence of not walking in the light is the promotion of self-indulgent lifestyles. Desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the pride of life promote goals of pleasure, success, and pride in even spiritual accomplishments. The challenge for mentors is to recognize that the natural man loves and desires to be conformed to the world so no matter how valid praise and claims of success are, they are reflections of pride.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

A major temptation for many is to claim sincere love for others by serving in positions of leadership or full-time ministries. Such responsibilities may be sincere but if the motives are for personal success, possibly control of others, that is not love. Sincere concern for the welfare of others is the true measure of genuine love (Philippians 2:20).

1 John 3:23,24 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ **and love one another**, just as he has commanded us. **Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.** And by this, we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (Also: John 15:10, John 14:15).

Important evidence of walking in the light is an abiding relationship with God. As previously discussed, abiding with Christ is the key to fearing God, respecting the absolute authority of His Word, and keeping/delighting in His commands.

1 John 4:9-12 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** No one has ever seen God; **if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.**

1 John 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

If there is evidence of fellowship, respect for God's Word, keeping His commandments, genuine love for others, and abiding friendships with God, Believers can have confidence in their relationship with God. These are the challenges for mentors and the measures of success of effective discipleship. Especially, genuine love for God and others which is the 7th challenge of "[Challenges to Disciple Children](#)".

Wise Believers understand the consequences of sin are misery, destruction, and death. They will be motivated to reflect God's love for the Word, to share the Gospel, and to mentor (disciple) others. As they walk in the light with fellow Believers, the brother/ sister relationships form dynamic communities. Being alert to opportunities, they share God's love with others, they strive to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21), and be salt and light.

Section 4, Elements of Effective Discipleship:

One-on-one Discipleship: A common philosophy in the modern American Church has been dependency upon group, congregation, and classroom teaching. Some aspects of discipleship can be accomplished in classroom-type settings but the Lord Jesus Christ's example was to disciple the 12 in one-on-one relationships. The specifics of Paul's discipleship effort are not as clearly described, and he did teach in group settings as well, but there are several indications that he also disciplined through one-on-one relationships. If goals of effective discipleship are embraced? If there are goals to mentor "Timothies", then it is proposed that it is vital to follow the Lord Jesus Christ's and Paul's examples of one-on-one discipleship.

As there should be many challenges to encourage dying to self and accountabilities, it follows that an important element of effective discipleship is the quality of the relationships between mentors and disciples in training.

Less mature Believers may be learning how to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ but as they walk in the light, the resulting fellowship enables them to be effectively discipled. Sadly, so many relationships within the Church are only casual friendships or less. Ultimately the goal of discipleship must be the development of genuine love, walking in the light, and abiding with the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not restricted to transforming lives, but His primary design for discipleship is within fellowship relationships.

Love: The importance of genuine love applies to all discipleship relationships. When Paul wrote, “I have you in my heart”, this was not a casual or polite statement but a clear declaration of his deep love and concern for fellow believers.

God instills a natural sacrificial love within parents for their children, which creates the perfect discipleship environment. Many fathers, especially young fathers/ parents are not significantly spiritually mature but God appoints them to be responsible for their children. While parents are far from perfect, if they diligently seek God’s direction, and lead by example, as the children become young adults, the lives of both the parents and the children will be transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Believers who were not effectively discipled when they were younger should seek appropriate mentors. To develop and deepen their friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ, it is recommended that they work through the discipleship Handbook until God provides an appropriate mentor.

Section 5, Summary:

When God reveals Himself to an individual and His Spirit enters and brings new life, they are born again.

1 John 2:15,16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

The heart of mankind is gripped with the lust-of-the-eyes, the lust-of-the-flesh, and the pride-of-life, producing powerful temptations and selfishness. However, God does not remove their lower natures, so He has commissioned discipleship to challenge, guide, and help Believers to crucify their selfishness and their pride-of-life.

The goal of Discipleship is love from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith.

The primary goal of sincere faith is for Believers to die to themselves by crucifying their pride-of-life and making Jesus Christ the Lord of their lives.

The goal of developing a pure heart is to develop an abiding friendship with God, becoming living sacrifices.

Sincere Faith and a Pure Heart provide the power to do what is right and to resist doing wrong, producing a Clear Conscience. These three foundations give Believers the power and desire to genuinely love God and others. Believers who walk in the light develop a constant awareness of God’s presence and abide in fellowship with Him.

When Believers abide with the Lord Jesus Christ, they hold absolute respect for God's Word, obey His commands, demonstrate fear of the Lord, and are endowed with wisdom. The ultimate measure of mature Disciples and evidence of walking in the light is genuine love for others. These qualities are the goals of discipleship, allowing Believers to have confidence in their relationship with God.

Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul modeled one-on-one discipleship. The hope and prayer is that the modern American Church takes up this challenge, applies Biblical principles, and brings a new era of presenting the Church before the Lord Jesus Christ without spot or wrinkle. Appendix D presents further challenges for Pastors and Church leaders.

[Ephesians 3:14-19](#), For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**—that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Post Script:

Looking back over 60 years, sadly, the social, moral, and spiritual condition of much of the modern Church has experienced a significant decline.

After considerable consideration, the conclusions and the proposals are that widespread failures are the result of the lack of effective discipleship for multiple generations. Therefore, the goal and prayer of this discussion is to define and help motivate many to embrace the importance of discipleship.

The ultimate goal is for many in the modern American Church to develop close personal friendships with the Lord Jesus Christ, which will bring Him tremendous honor.

Over the years, as some of the principles were identified, I lamented the lack of understanding and implementation of some of the truths when we raised our now-adult children. Hopefully, they will embrace these truths as they raise and disciple their children.

Appendix A, examples of those who walk in the light:

Of the thousands of Christians that I have met and known over the years, sadly, there has been fellowship with very few of them. It is not possible to know the true nature of the relationship that many have with the Lord Jesus Christ, but those who walk in fellowship have been a delight and a joy. The light of a few of these fellow Believers is worth describing.

Mr. B is one of the few men that I have known who consistently memorized and meditated on God's Word. He rose early every morning to present devotions with his children before He went to work. Fellowship with Mr. B was a joy. However, God allowed him to be stricken with a debilitating disease and his physical abilities continued to decline for over two decades. For many of those years, he was bound

to a wheelchair. As his illness progressed, he was fed through a feeding tube. In the end, he could barely talk, but he often whispered prayers with visitors. Mr. B never complained, and there were no reports or evidence that he was ever bitter at God, he walked in the light, and the love relationship that he had with the Lord Jesus Christ was obvious.

Some of the greatest fellowship that I had was with Mr. J. Shortly after we met, Mr. J was like a brother. He wanted to emphasize the importance of marriage for his children so he and his family drove several hours to give an anniversary party for another dear brother. After the party, as Mr. J finished cleaning up, he suffered a massive heart attack. His wife and children said goodbye as he went to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. I really look forward to seeing this dear brother in the Lord.

Both Mr. B and Mr. J often made the comment, "God is Sovereign". They both trusted that God was in control and that His ways were higher than our ways. When Mr. J went to be with the Lord, I proclaimed to God, "Don't you know that we are short of Godly men down here?" Of all of the men that God should have used to accomplish great things for His Kingdom, it should have been these men. I later had to ask God for forgiveness. God's ways are not our ways and I was forced to consider, "What does God value from His Children?" To accomplish great things for His Kingdom or to walk humbly with Him.

Then there was Mr. M, who grew up on a farm. He had a fantastic knowledge of the Bible and Biblical philosophies that were very practical and extremely valuable. We spent many hours discussing various Biblical issues. Mr. M decided that he had made enough money so he retired early with plans to go on the mission field. However, while working to gain the required credentials, Mr. M had a massive heart attack. He survived for about another 8 years but every time he attempted to go to the mission field, God allowed him to have more physical challenges. Mr. M recently went to be with the Lord. I so appreciated our fellowship together. Mr. M had a tremendous desire to honor God and a close friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ. God did not choose to use Mr. M to do great things for His Kingdom but Mr. M greatly impacted many of those whom God brought into his life.

Surprisingly, there has only been fellowship with a few pastors, one of whom was Pastor D. He was a great pastor in every respect. He had a fantastic grasp of God's Word, he knew and feared God, and he held Biblical convictions. One of his convictions was not to remarry divorced individuals, but the leadership of the Church did not respect his conviction so they fired him. He worked diligently to start a new Church but God directed him away from full-time ministry. Pastor D continued to share the Gospel, disciple young Believers, and lead home Bible studies for decades. During the last few years of his life, our life situations allowed me to spend considerable time together before he went to be with the Lord. I enjoyed discussing so many Biblical philosophies, issues, and truths but the true value was our fellowship together.

Another fellow Believer was Dr. D. I didn't have much opportunity to know him very well but I have had great fellowship with some of his children, his grandchildren, and his "Timothy". Dr. D walked humbly before God and many came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because he was so effective at demonstrating God's unconditional love. Many years ago, God prompted him with the question, "Why are we sharing the Gospel with those who have heard it before". So, he jumped on a plane and flew to

India. He continued his medical practice in the States but he flew to India many times over the years. Dr. D shared God's love and then disciplined new believers. He emphasized the importance of sharing the Gospel and for them to disciple others. He was a "tent-maker" as he ministered part-time for over 40 years. He went to be with the Lord last year. The result of the one-on-one discipleship ministry is pushing 10 million. The claims of his ministry efforts were so spectacular, that inquiries were made to verify if they were true. Not only were the results true but God allowed many of the Disciples to survive severe persecution, and they continue to share the Gospel and disciple others. It is estimated that God used Dr. D's efforts to share the Gospel with over 100 million individuals. God did use Dr. D. He accomplished great things for God's Kingdom, but what set him apart was his love for God. What is ironic is that while God used Dr. D so mightily, he is virtually unknown within the modern American Church. With such powerful ministry results, he could have been highly renowned. The best explanation for his lack of fame is that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ and desired to raise Him up instead of himself.

Every one of those who walked in the light, in fellowship, and in love held strong convictions of the sovereignty of God's Word, of the sanctity of marriage, and the importance of disciplining others, especially their children. None claimed to be perfect and in humility, they clung to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they sinned, they ran toward God instead of running away from Him.

It is impossible to adequately describe the relationships that each of these men had with God. Their fellowship, abiding friendships with God, and their love are clear evidence that they walk in the light.

Appendix B, marriage:

With so many Christian marriages failing, it is important to consider how they can be strengthened.

Ephesians chapter 5 describes marriage as a model of the relationship between the Church and the Lord Jesus Christ. This model reveals insights into the relationship between Believers and God. God desires to purify the Church and consistent with the model of marriage He uses it to purify spouses.

The primary Biblical terms in Greek for love are Eros, Philos, and Agape. Each of these types of love represents qualities of the foundation of marriage and provides insight into why some marriages fail and others succeed.

Marriages built upon Eros love, emotional attachments, romance, and sex are at tremendous risk of failure because the emphasis on Eros love is what each of the partners can selfishly get for themselves. Eros love feeds pride-of-life. Any relationship based on selfish motives is built on sand and is doomed to failure. As soon as either party stops receiving what they want, the relationship begins to be washed away.

Marriages based upon Philos love (friendships) weather storms much better because they are built on qualities like faithfulness, honesty, dependability, and others. The mutual responsibilities of friendships require loyalty and faithfulness of all parties. Philos relationships are not as self-centered and therefore support and promote stronger marriages. Both Christian and non-Christian marriages built on Philos love are often successful, and able to survive significant storms.

Because of the deceitfulness of the heart, the natural man cannot sustain Agape love. Thankfully, as Believers bow to Jesus Christ as their Lord, they are able to walk in the light and offer Agape love. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of both spouses' lives, as they walk in the light, they are able to go beyond friendship (Philos) and have fellowship (Agape). The joy and love of these marriages greatly honor and please God. Therefore, as the ultimate goal of effective discipleship is Agape love, the path to building successful marriages is discipleship.

Sadly, in American culture, many relationships and marriages begin with romantic attraction (Eros love). A few of these relationships are able to grow into friendships (Philos) and fewer can walk in fellowship together (Agape). By the very nature of Eros love, the probability of such relationships surviving is very low. For marriages built on Eros foundations to survive, it is critical that both spouses work to submit their selfish wants and desires to the Lord Jesus Christ. They can then begin to focus on serving others to transform the foundation of their marriage into friendships (Philos love). Such transformations are challenging but sincere repentance and reliance on God are possible. Given that the devastating numbers of failed marriages within the Church are about the same as non-Christian, the statistics indicate that many marriages within the modern American Church are built on selfish Eros love.

Weak foundations can be strengthened but the smoothest path to a successful marriage is for Believers to walk in the light, respecting others as their brothers and sisters in purity and fellowship. Then if God's design is for a couple to be married, strong friendships will grow out of their fellowship, and romantic love will grow out of their friendship. Marriages built on Agape love greatly honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who start with Eros love face tougher obstacles but if both spouses are willing to crucify pride-of-life, making Jesus Christ Lord, they can successfully build marriages that honor the Lord Jesus Christ. It is easier for marriages built on Philos love to be successful but the spouses face the same challenges of bowing to Jesus Christ as Lord are the same. Regardless of the foundation of marriages, the key to strengthening marriages is effective discipleship.

A comment worth noting is that Believers married to non-Christians must realize that their marriage can never develop beyond Philo love.

Appendix C, The furnace:

When I fall into temptations, I ask forgiveness and then determine to put it out of my life. Many times, that is the end of it but, living sacrifices try to wiggle off of the altar.

God commands us to burn idols with fire and the root of sin is worshiping the false god of self. So, as a solution, I constructed a furnace in my mind where I visualize throwing temptations, wrong ideas, thoughts, and pictures into the furnace to be burnt. If they crawl back out, I purpose not to dwell on them and quickly throw them back into the fire. I continue throwing them back in as long as it takes until they are destroyed. For stronger temptations, I watch them burn and sometimes turn up the flames.

When I was younger and looked into the furnace, there were smoldering piles of ashes as far as I could imagine. Thankfully, in recent years there are only a few piles of smoldering ashes. There is nothing “magic” about my furnace but the key is mental discipline.

Appendix D, Challenges for Leaders:

The first challenge for all Christians, especially leaders, is to honestly evaluate yourself, your family, and everyone you serve. Regardless of any credentials, or “successes”, if God’s love is not the primary driving force, honest repentance is necessary.

The second challenge is to be on constant guard against pride. The pride-of-life motivates all, great and small to desire to be great before men. One-on-one discipleship is vital but many do not view it as accomplishing great things for God and it is not likely to attract great recognition. Is it important to do great things for God or should Believers be conduits for God to do great things? God does choose a few to be recognized to do great things for Him but one of their greatest challenges is to deal with the tremendous temptations of pride. Thus, God’s design for most is to reproduce God’s love in others through one-on-one discipleship.

The “fruit” of pride and arrogance (pride-of-life) is often discouragement and resentment towards God. Resentment turns into bitterness; bitterness yields moral failure and moral failures result in further failures (Romans 1). Sadly, this series of events describes too many pastors and Church leaders who drop out of their ministries. When Believers repeatedly struggle and fail, they need to put away their bitterness and anger, embracing God’s love with thankfulness. Then as they experience God’s unconditional love and forgiveness, when they are gripped by God’s love, they will develop a constant awareness of Him (abiding in Christ), and their life will be truly transformed. Effective one-on-one discipleship will change hearts and must become a very high priority.

A third challenge is that discipleship “programs” are often designed around a series of accomplishments and applications. Applications promote the development of credentials and intellectual achievements but they do not measure heart attitudes. Thus it is common for “champions” of the faith to have catastrophic failures in their lives and ministries, usually bringing tremendous shame to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Knowledge puffs up but love builds up”. The risk of focusing on “applications” is that they usually engage and strengthen pride-of-life. The goal must be true transformation, which begins with dying to self (pride-of-life). And because accountability is so vital, effective discipleship must be developed through one-on-one relationships.

2 Timothy 2:2 “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy, a key element of the leadership of the early Church to disciple faithful men. Discipleship cannot only be taught from the pulpit but Pastors and Church leaders must lead by example.

Most modern Churches have a monolithic leadership structure over congregations. The dynamics of faithful men who have disciplesd others in one-on-one relationships results in a “family” structure, forming powerful communities compared to how modern Churches operate. Through the Apostle Paul, God built the early Church on a discipleship foundation which is responsible for the Church surviving and spreading the Gospel for over 2000 years. Monolithic leadership structures over the millennium have propagated tremendous failures and most have not survived very long after the founders have passed on.

A final comment is that discipleship is important but the goal of preparing Believers to disciple others presents dynamic challenges, purpose, and direction for Believers and Churches.

Therefore, Pastors and Church leaders must follow the examples of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul.

Appendix E, Sincere Faith, A Pure Heart, and a Clear Conscience reflected in Psalms 51:

Psalms 51: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

(A Perspective of Sincere Faith)

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

(A Perspective of Sincere Faith)

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.**

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

and uphold me with a willing spirit.
(A Perspective of a Pure Heart)

- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- (Demonstrating love to others with a Clear Conscience)

- ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.