

DISCIPLE MAKING

A PODCAST WITH DR. JOHN TOLSON

Episode 12: Characteristics of a Disciple: Part 1

If you live long enough, you begin to focus on things that matter. I believe in my own heart that what matters most, especially if I am a follower of Jesus Christ, is how we change the planet. If you're going to change the planet, if you're going to change our country, you've got to change people, and the only person I know that can change an individual is Jesus Christ. So how does that happen? How do we engage in God's plan to do that?

In Matthew 28, Jesus says to go and make disciple-makers. He actually used the word "disciples" but as you begin to dig in and understand the translation, it means to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. I mentioned that the word "Christian" is only mentioned three times in the New Testament. The word "disciple" is mentioned approximately 269 times. If you look up each one of those words and do your due diligence and throw all of your findings into the top of a funnel, out of the bottom drop three things that the word or term "disciple" means in the New Testament.

What does the word *disciple* mean and what bearing does it have on you and me personally and how God wants us to operate in terms of allowing Him to flow through us to make a difference in the lives of other people? First of all, a disciple is a learner. If you look at Matthew 11:28, Jesus says "come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." So, to be a learner means to be teachable. Someone said it this way: "As long as you live you learn and as long as you learn you live."

What we are asking here is not "Did you learn?" but "Are you learning?" It's an ongoing process. Let me give you a thought that is critical as we talk about learning: Biblically speaking, true learning only takes place when it changes how you live. Just because you've been exposed to the Scripture does not mean you have necessarily learned it. If it's not changing you and me then we haven't learned it. We have only been exposed to the Truth, not transformed by it.

So, are you engaged in learning with the intent to live it? Are you letting God change you through what you are learning? Take notes when you study the Bible. When your pastor teaches, write things down. The shortest pencil is longer than the longest memory. Always remember: Biblically speaking, true learning only takes place when it changes how you live.

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