

The 'Discipleship Check List' Transcript

A GV247.TV Programme presented by Stewart Menelaws

DCL No10: Fellowship & Accountability:

This series is for any Christian believer who is either at the very beginning of their journey with Jesus Christ or has been a believer for some years but lacks a sound understanding of the Christian faith. It should also prove to be a helpful aid which interlinks with all our resources for Shepherds, Overseers and Believers reaching out to others.

This topic is one of the most misunderstood in the Christian Church, which has sadly led to individuals undergoing spiritual and even physical abuse at the hands of those who are entrusted with their spiritual journey as members of the Body of Christ. At one end of the spectrum, new converts can either be ignored and left to their own devices, never understanding the meaning of true discipleship, or at the other end, suffer control, oppression and fear.

God's Order: (Genesis chapters 1 & 2 - 1 Cor 12:12-27) Throughout Creation and the Body of Christ...

The Bible speaks clearly of God's order. From creation itself (Genesis 1:1-28), through to the laws and decrees given at Mount Sinai (See Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and on into discipleship training by the Lord Jesus Christ, and in due course, the orderly framework of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

At no point will you see disorder in regard to God's character. Disorder, which is the equivalent of a selfish attitude, was sharply admonished by Paul to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 11:17-22). Disorder also equates to a lack of discipline which is the opposite characteristic that a disciple should stand for.

Order is at the very heart of God, Who is love (1 John 4:8). As followers of Christ we are required to be trained in righteousness which equates to a disciplined life (2 Tim 3:16-17).

- Obedience is the foundation to an upright walk with God (1 Samuel 15:22)
- Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and leads to death (1 Samuel 15:23)

Whether a Christian is in leadership or a disciple under instruction, humility, contrition and fear of God's Word should be the continual bedrock of life (Isaiah 66:2). This works out in acting justly, love of mercy, and humility before God (Micah 6:8).

Every soul who turns to Christ requires orderly support to help them on their journey of discipleship; the study of God's Word and learning to apply each lesson within a committed body of believers who have two things in common:- their love of God and love for each other. This foundational work will enable each believer to go on to love their neighbour and even their enemies.

- Discipleship needs to be at the heart of every believer (Matthew 28:19)
- Regularly meeting with other disciples is the best way to grow (Hebrews 10:25)

Accountability - Leadership Roles: Servants of the Church...

Before we look at the importance of fellowship within 'Church' and the need for spiritual accountability, we first need to look at some of the roles appointed by God for the equipping of every believer who comes to Christ. The word 'Church' in the biblical context is where two or more gather in The Lord's Name. It is not a building that is commonly called a place of meeting or worship.

When a number of Christians begin to meet regularly there comes the need to have Godly order and God appointed leadership. We see these principles as fledgling churches begin to grow in Acts 6:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 11:19 - and on throughout the NT letters. A church that lacks Godly leadership will flounder. It's only a matter of time.

It must be The Lord who appoints individuals for a given role of service within the Church, and while in every case these appointed saints have a God given authority (Hebrews 13:17), they are servants of God for the building up of the body.

Shepherd/Pastor - Overseer/Bishop - Deacon/Deaconess

God-appointed individuals will have been tested and are willing servants who act as overseers of souls. They are able to instruct in God's Word and need to be above reproach. (Ephesians 4:11-16 & 1 Tim 3:1-13)

- The Shepherd (Pastor) shepherds the flock. He is willing, gentle, a protector of the flock and sets a good example (Acts 20:28). He will ensure that every believer under his service is trained in righteousness and encouraged towards maturity in the faith.
- The Overseer or Deacon is often seen as a supporting role alongside the Shepherd and once again should, after testing, be appointed prayerfully.
- Shepherd, Elder, Overseer and Deacon can have overlapping roles (Acts 20:28 and Philippians 1:1). The Apostle Peter was a fellow-elder (1 Peter 5:1) but all in all, servants of The Lord are chosen for the equipping of the saints.

What is meant by Accountability? Leadership...

These servants of God are accountable before God for the souls put under their charge for training and teaching sound doctrine and Christian living (Titus 2:1-10). This is a most solemn role and because of this, Disciples of Christ must give proper respect to their leadership as is correct in the Lord (Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-20). Do not entertain a baseless accusation against a God appointed leader unless the evidence is provided by two or three reliable witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

What is meant by Accountability? Discipleship...

For those unfamiliar with discipleship for that is what the Lord Jesus Christ is looking for – please go to *DCL1-Discipleship* in this series.

If you desire to learn a trade or profession you will always find that training under instruction and in conjunction with others is where you will develop correctly. The Body of Christ is not an independent collection of believers. It is a corporate collection of disciples under training.

Those being trained in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17) must learn to submit to those who teach in accordance with God's Word. We are to respect those who work hard among us and watch over us (1 Thess 5:12-13). We are to submit to one another in love out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)

I can manage on my own:

Tragically there are those who have been very deeply damaged by organisations claiming to speak for God, and many have been abused by despicable individuals who have harmed God's people.

There are others who find interaction with people challenging - and feel more comfortable on their own, and others who think they just don't need to bother being part of a church.

Interaction with other Christ centred believers is an excellent way to grow in every way. Having anointed servant-heart leadership watch over your development is a wonderful secure environment where your doctrine and actions can be tested and honed.

Warnings:

- A shepherd/overseer who abuses the sheep will be sent to the Lake of Fire (Matt 24:45-51).

The believer who is wise in their own eyes (Isaiah 5:21) is in a worse position than a fool (Prov 26:12). Such an individual will operate independently and will inevitably succumb to false doctrine.

- A believer who runs ahead of the teaching of Christ is self-deceived and lost (2 John 9)

To Conclude:

Individuals appointed by God to oversee His people must be diligent in maintaining an upright walk before God, holding fast to sound doctrine and gently instructing the disciple towards maturity in Christ.

The role of the disciple under instruction is to meet regularly with brethren and respect those who watch over their souls as they move towards maturity in Christ and acts of service.

- Godly submission is the mark of humility, contrition and fear of God's Word.
- Rebellion is the mark of individualism, separation from brethren, arrogance and pride.

Once this has been understood, it is now a case of faithfulness and perseverance.

Christ centred fellowship and biblical accountability is for our own good.

Next week (DCL No11) we look at:

Brotherly/Sisterly love, forgiveness and judgement...

The 'Discipleship Check List' series has been produced with the sole aim of encouraging the hearer / reader to study the Holy Bible so that faith in Jesus Christ will be built on Him alone. Every human work is fallible and whilst every effort has been made to represent the truths of God Almighty's Holy Words, this series is but an aid to help encourage study so that the Christian disciple of Jesus Christ will go onto maturity in the most Holy faith.

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