

DISCIPLESHIP: BEING AND MAKING DISCIPLES

(Reaction to paper by Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández)

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“BEING” DISCIPLES: THE LIFE OF WINSOME, NOTABLE AND CONTAGIOUS HOLINESS

It is certain that a majority of our churches have placed emphasis only on salvation and not on sanctification. The worst is that many have done it in a rhetorical form and not practical. How important is the life style of an authentic Christian that is expressed by what comes from the inside, where there is no hypocrisy or dissimulation. In entire sanctification we can feel this transformation from the internal tendency of disobedience, towards being obedient. And the energy to serve God. Given that we have learned that the word *qodesh* in Hebrew in our language means to be separated or consecrated, purity and shining. These terms will have a lot of relevance for the disciple of God; especially the last one has a notable relation with the witness, to be light, invading, shining and glorious.

1. **Individuals make up the society, which influences them, but there is interdependence between them.** We can not be removed from reality; we need to take into account the Priestly Prayer of Jesus: “we are in the world but not of the world”. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are not to conform to this world, but transform it. How is important this contribution is to the development of our community. The *kerygma* (proclamation), the madness of preaching, must not be alone without *diakonia* (service). John Wesley declares “The phrase ‘solitary saints’ contradicts the teaching of the gospel as much as the phrase ‘holy adulterers’”. The Gospel of Christ only knows a religion that is social, and only knows a holiness that is social.”¹ To live an authentic holiness in the world, for the world.
2. **Testimony.** The church advances through a form of proclamation that is related to the personal testimony of the believers². This testimony can be verbal or non-verbal. In the Bible we find the two forms, in the story of Paul’s conversion and another in the recommendation of Peter, “...if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior...” (1 Peter 3:1). Non-verbal testimony is appreciated and perceived by those around us; we are open letters and we make disciples without having a formal curriculum, in all the ways that we teach. The verbal must be done for two reasons, as Drury states, “First, it will confirm the experience to you. Just as public confession about conversion confirmed your own salvation, so speaking up about God’s second work of grace will confirm this level of living to you. Second, talking about it will encourage other believers to keep seeking a deeper walk with God. So, certainly you should tell others. Just make sure you don’t set yourself up as superior”.³

¹ George Lyons, *Santidad in la vida diaria* (Kansas City: CNP, 1999), 70.

² Richard Taylor, *Diccionario teológico Beacon* (Kansas City: CNP), 693.

³ Keith Drury *Holiness for Ordinary People* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 124-125.

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3. **Attract people.** Not only saints attract; by nature the human being is attracted to evil more than to good, as Lyons argues: “We cannot deny the power of influence. However, influence is a two-way street. Bad people can influence good people to do evil. But, good people can influence in the bad ones so that they do good. The question is: Which has more power? Filthiness or the soap? Holiness or impurity?”⁴ Therefore saints attract the holy, whose fruit has virtues. We will mention the most important one, love. More than the first Christians, the model is our Lord himself, as Moore describes: “Jesus captivated the heart of his disciples with his unconditional love. His love always sought to do the best for those who were under his training.”⁵

“MAKING” DISCIPLES

The challenge of the 21st century not only requires developing methods and contemporary strategies for discipleship, but it seems important to me to return to Jesus’ principles and values in discipleship. Many times the relativism of our time makes us forget our fundamental principles. Norberto Saracco, argues the following:

We live in a special time in Latin America. We dream of cities and nations transformed by the power of the Gospel and we work towards this. We have been creative in methods and strategies, and that has allowed us to fill our churches and think of projects that before we would have never have thought of. However, we see with depression that hardly anything has changed. Corruption keeps increasing, as does violence, poverty and social exclusion, without even mentioning the moral decadence that is more and more rooted within and outside of the church.⁶

Among these principles we mention: He chose disciples that make disciples (John 15:16). They accompanied him, walked together to form lives (Mark 3:14). He fixed his sight on the final product. “...Jesus as discipler saw people not as they were at that moment but as they were going to be. In each one he saw the “finished model” and he treated them according to this vision.”⁷

1. **A vocation for the entire church.** Instead of the vocation that has a connotation of the being of the church, it would be better to say the mission that has the connotation of the reason for being; in this manner it would give the task of making disciples. “To be congruent with its encompassing nature, the mission must conduct a labor that the gospels of the New Testament described as formation of disciples. Therefore, a broad mission must be accompanied by a deep mission.”⁸

This is truly a challenge. Up to now it only appears as an unreached ideal. But it is a call. It is up to us to follow after it, as we leave from this conference, to make disciples that make disciples.

⁴ Lyons, op. cit., 56.

⁵ Waylon B. Moore. *Multiplicación de discípulos*. CBP, 1985, pp. 19-20.

⁶ Norberto Saracco, “Jesús como disciplador”, *Apuntes Pastoral*, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (2004), 34.

⁷ Ibid., 29-32.

⁸ Orlando Costas, “La misión como disciplado”, *Boletín teológico* (marzo-abril 1982), 45.

2. **Pastoring each one.** Personalized attention, the effectiveness of the work of discipling, is in the quality. To reach such a purpose requires an investment of time, “since to invest our life in a growing disciple we can not do it without spending considerable time with him. The size of the group of Christ’s men was related to the purpose of having available time with them”.⁹

It is completely proven in our day that the churches that grow are those that use cell groups or small groups, as they did in the early church; church in homes of the early Christians.

3. **Making disciples is a process.** This is how John Stam describes it: “The discipleship of Jesus was permanent. The invitation was for life. Therefore, no one could hope to graduate... from being Jesus’ disciples; they hoped to continue learning from their Teacher, depending on him and serving him.”¹⁰

Therefore, I would say that to be and to make disciples in a continuous process, following Jesus and directing others to him. An effective relationship with Him in our lives and in their lives. Feedback and paying the price.

4. **Constant updating of strategies and methods.** Before concerning ourselves with the how, we must know why. Let us concern ourselves about the foundation before the form. Strategies and methods change and should be updated according to time and space, but the principles will be the same for every place and time. Speaking of strategies there will be a lot to share regarding personal experiences and applied experiences in each country in Ibero-America. You can do “discipleship through the Internet” but it will never surpass personal interaction, the appreciation and touching and seeing.

⁹ Moore, op. cit., 59-60.

¹⁰ Costas, op. cit., 47.