

STUDENT AND YOUTH CONGRESS (SAYCO) 2023

DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR:

DISCIPLESHIP: THE MAKING OF THE “MORE THAN CONQUERORS” BRAND.

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Introduction

It is an obvious truth that the life of a young man or woman is a battle. There is equally a battle raging over him/her between God and Satan. The youth that is engulfed in this battle either wins (and becomes a conqueror) or loses and becomes a victim. There are critical choices and trainings that determine which side of the divide one falls.

Unfortunately, majority of youths in our generation are casualties in life battles already, and thus invariably ignorantly proceed into adult life to get stranded, amidst intractable entanglements and complications.

However, the youth who is in Christ has a different life trajectory. He carries the ‘seed’ of an overcoming life. He does not only conquer few isolated life battles, but is consistently prevailing in personal life issues, in relationships, in marital affairs, in academics, career, ministry, etc. Indeed, like Daniel company of old, the youth in Christ is ‘ten times better’ than their mates in the world! Listen to what the word of God says:

“I write unto you **young men**, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” “I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” 1John 2:13,14.

It is clear from these scriptures that the youth in Christ can actually be that brand or specie that is more than conquerors in life. They are masters over Satan, - the wicked one – because they operate in higher spiritual realms than him! What you carry inside you as a Christian young man or young woman is a dynamite, powerful enough that you are not permitted to be under, but on top only.

Whereas verse 13 of the above scripture simply declared the youth in Christ as conqueror over the wicked one with whom he battles in life, verse 14 brings out the fact that there is a process that brings about that victory. It reveals that it’s “because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you”. In other words, there is a ‘making’, a life-processing, a deliberate and concerted preparation. This is intentional discipleship. Without this making, the hope of becoming the more-than-conqueror brand becomes a mirage. Many young people, including believers, are ignorant of this life-training, while some others simply neglect it. Yet, they day-dream about becoming champions in life. No wonder they turn out in ‘near success syndrome’ or as accidented celebrities! Even

in the world of sports and physical armed warfare, winners and victors emerge from the side that has better training and equipment. Same for those in the professional careers, including participants in the political space. Mediocre men never excel, since they avoided tutelage. Diligence in training and envisioning is the greatest empowerment that propels excellence.

There were many youths in the bible days who took on the battles of life, as well as battles for God's kingdom and prevailed as conquerors. The list includes people like Joseph, Joshua, Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego, Esther, Ruth, Paul, Timothy, etc. One key matter that is common to all of them is the fact that they had to **undergo** training experiences before they could **overcome** for God. There is no short-cut route to being more than conquerors.

Thus, there is a call for every youth that intends to make impact for God to agree to take on the yoke of discipleship - divine disciplinary dealings - that capacitates him or her for placement in God's army. Lam. 3:27 (AMPC). You must give up the erroneous concept of instant success or instant anointing. That is a fallacy. The truth is that you need God's molding hands upon you especially in this 'morning' season of your life.

Definition of terms

Conqueror: to conquer means,

- to defeat (someone or something) through the use of force;
- to overcome by force of arms;
- to gain mastery or win by overcoming obstacles or opposition.

Synonyms include: dominate, overpower, subdue, subject, subjugate, subordinate, vanquish.

Making: to make means,

- to cause to exist, occur, or appear
- to bring into being by forming, shaping, or altering materials or putting parts together.

Drawing from these dictionary definitions we can infer that a conqueror brand is that believer who can gain mastery over and win the battles of life and of the kingdom by overcoming obstacles and oppositions. This requires an innate force or energy. That spiritual and mental energy can only be generated by the process of divine making. This making itself requires that the believer submits himself for God to particularly construct, structure, prepare and envision him through the combining of various experiences so that he is thoroughly fitted for every good work.

1. DEFINITION, CONCEPT AND GOALS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a training process by which a believer in Christ is being made to become like his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Discipleship is learning Jesus. It is a process, as opposed to the New Birth which is an event. In other words, the New Birth is a miracle that takes place in a moment, even though very often several things might happen in the life of the unsaved man over a period of time to bring him to the ultimate point of conviction. Discipleship is not so. Rather, it is a process of learning and following in Jesus steps, until one is progressively becoming like Him. This takes place over a period; indeed, a life time. It is a life training program aimed at reproducing the life of Christ in a believer. Luke 6:40; KJV, NIV.

Conformity to the image of Christ is the principal goal of discipleship. At the same time, it is paramount in God's eternal purpose and high calling for the heirs of salvation. Therefore, God has preordained (i.e., has already made it compulsory) that those who answer the call of salvation, having been born again of like incorruptible nature as His Son, should grow into His full stature. (Rom. 8:28-29; Heb. 2:11; 1Pet. 1:23; 1John 3:9.) We shall discuss later the divine dynamics entailed in this conformation process.

Another goal of discipleship is the matter of fruit bearing (i.e., reproduction). As one progresses in his conformity to the life and personality of Jesus, he invariably becomes useable in the Master's hands, being zealous for good works and seeking to bring the unsaved to his Lord. Discipleship equips us to fulfil our Light-and-Salt ministry on earth, as the Lord commanded us. This fruit-bearing must be in such a manner that the fruit will abide. The disciple learns "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mark 3:14; John 15:16; Matt 28:20.

Moreover, this conformity takes place as the disciple intentionally and consistently finds space to be with the Master in personal communion. The first appointment that Jesus gave to those first disciples He chose was "that they should be with Him". That was followed by: "that he might send them" to do other things for Him. Being with Him precedes being sent by Him! It is as the disciple keeps communing with the Lord (through worship, prayers, study of the Word, etc.) that His glorious image is being transmitted to the disciple. 1Cor. 3:18

Discipleship is God's means of making vessels for His use. Apostles of tomorrow must first be disciples of today. If ever you can effectively enter into God's call for your life and fulfill it, you must heed this call. All that lasted in the hands of God were first made by Him. Even the First man had to be made deliberately as God prescribed. See Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Matt. 4:18-20

1(b). WHO IS A DISCIPLE?

One who is born of the Spirit. John 3:1-7; 1Cor 2:13-15

A follower (Learner, student, apprentice) of Christ. Luke 6:40

One who willing submits to the Lordship (yoke) of Christ. Matt 11:28-30

One whose lifestyle, ideas, programs and pursuits are being constantly inspired and moderated by the words of Jesus. John 8:31-32

One who believes in the wisdom, love and ability of the Master.

Job 13:15,19, 25-47; Rom 8:28

One who loves the Master supremely. 1Chron. 11:15-19; Acts 4:12-20

One who is not only available for the Master, but expendable for Him. Acts 20:22-24

2. CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Here we seek to answer the question of the biblical basis for discipleship. Why is discipleship so important or necessary?

Firstly, it is because the Lord Jesus commits Himself (His presence, His program, His authority) only to disciples. He does not commit Himself to multitude believers, because they are unreliable, unpredictable and undependable. Multitude believers are pliable, fair-weather followers. It is a risk to entrust eternal (i.e., divine) things unto them, as such uncommitted professors of faith are neither durable nor expendable. See John 2:23-25; 8:30-32; Job 39:9-12.

Again, multitude believers are mere heirs (i.e., potential inheritors) of the kingdom life and glory. Only disciples are mature sons - actual partakers and full beneficiaries - who exhibit the manifold wisdom of God in Christ. See Gal 4:1-3; Eph 4:13-15. It is by the process of discipleship that the recipients of salvation are trained to become mature, reasonable and responsible sons, worthy of bearing costly pearls of the kingdom.

Multitude believers seek God purely for the benefit they will get from Him. They do not seek Him because they really love Him and desire to serve Him. They are unwilling to bear any inconveniences for Him, neither can they even endure His 'hard sayings'. As a disciple you must understand that once the Master removes the heavy yokes of Satan and Sin from your neck, He offers you His own yoke in exchange. You become yoked to Him, to learn of Him and follow in His footsteps thenceforth. John 6:26-27, 60; Matt. 11:28-29.

2(b) The Challenge of His Call.

What then is the call to discipleship? It is a call to come out of the crowd followership unto a personal following of Christ. It is a call to come "outside the camp" and "unto the mount" where God makes His men.

It is a call “to be with Him” whom you have believed, that you may know Him and be changed into His likeness. See Matt 4:23-5; 2, Heb.13:12-13; Mark 3:13; John 1:35-41.

The challenge before you, therefore, is one of personal commitments:

Commitment to the Lordship of Christ over you personally.

Commitment to being with Jesus in personal devotions.

Commitment to learning Jesus and pressing to become like Him.

Commitment to death to Sin, death to Self, and death to the world system.

Commitment to fruitfulness.

Having answered the call to salvation, may God help you to respond well to this call also; for it is one and the same call. It is He who gave the call to salvation who also gave the call to discipleship. Therefore, consciously place your all upon the altar before your loving Saviour who rightfully seeks to be your Lord.

2(c) Making Progress in Discipleship

Four critical conditions are involved in the dynamics of a disciple’s transformation. These are:

Readiness to change by the Word: Be humble to accept your need of help and consistently expose yourself to God’s word. The word of God that will profit you must cause a ‘grafting’. Any time you hear God’s word, something has to be cut off, for the new to be implanted. The Word that changes you is always an “engrafted word”. James 1:21-25; John 8:30-32; 1Tim. 4:15-16.

Yielding to God’s practical instruments of divine making: God brings transformation to your life by bringing or allowing various experiences, sometimes bitter and painful, to your life as His instruments for working out the life of Christ that is embedded inside you. You must cooperate with God in patient faith, rather than resist or despise them. Rom. 8:28-29; 1Cor. 4:11; Heb. 12:5-6,11; Jer. 48:11.

Continuity in following: Lack of continuity in attempting to live by what you learn is a guaranty for failure in discipleship. You should be that “wise man” whose progress in discipleship will become evident to all because you do the sayings of Jesus that you hear continually.

Effective Relationship with Your Disciplex: Your Disciplex – the more mature disciple who bears spiritual oversight in your life - is a key instrument in fast-forwarding your transformation experience, if you willingly yield him or her the right to instruct you in the way of the Lord. God often watches your progress with your Disciplex. As time goes on, He uses that to evaluate you and see whether you are qualified to hold any trust for Him or not. Luke 16:12.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIP PROCESS

Most times God uses other men He had made to make other vessels. Examples include David, Moses, Joshua, Elisha, the Apostles, Paul, Timothy. You have need to yield your neck to the yoke of Christ to learn of Him, and to submit to the godly oversight of mature spiritual human hands who will assist you in your walk with God. We shall hereby consider just two case studies.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA 1Kgs. 19:16-21; 2Kgs. 3:11; 2:1-25.

- (a) Elisha was an Israelite, one of the people of God even before he answered the call unto discipleship. So apart from being born-again, you still need to take the definite step to become a disciple of Jesus (1Kgs. 19:16).
- (b) Elisha took a definite step to become Elijah's apprentice. He did away with all that may hinder him from making discipleship a reality in his life (1 Kgs. 19:21).
- (c) He left his own personal program and ambition in order to follow this program of God for his life. Even though he was a large-scale farmer, he humbled himself to become an ordinary servant of Elijah just for God's purpose to be fulfilled in his life (1kgs. 19:21; 2 Kgs. 3:11). What is God asking you to give up in order for His purpose to be fulfilled in your life?
- (d) He was a man of one focus; He became what God wanted him to be; he became a prophet after Elijah.

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

- (a) Each of the disciples of Jesus started by first deciding to follow Him. They were 'born-again' in a sense (Matt.4:18-25). In vs 25 large crowds followed him also apart from those who later became his disciples.
- (b) After being born-again, following Jesus with the crowd, each disciple came to a point where he took definite steps to become his disciple (Mark 3:13-19).
- (c) Each of the disciples abandoned his own life program and business to become Jesus' apprentice. E.g., Peter left fishing, Matthew left tax collection.
- (d) They endured hardship. They followed Jesus both in favourable and unfavourable conditions. They left parents, wives and loved ones to follow Jesus. And they suffered rebuke, hunger, storms and other hardships with Him (John 4:1-8; Matt. 8: 23-27). They did not dodge inconveniences.
- (e) They obeyed the Master loyally and devotedly (Matt. 21:1-6, Matt. 26:17-19; Acts 1:4-5, 12-14).
- (f) They were eventually commissioned and empowered for service. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:1-4)
- (g) Appointment unto kingdom service is through discipleship. (Acts 1:14-26)

CONCLUSION

God's more-than-conquerors brand is attainable for the Christian youth. You need not be merely surviving when you can blossom and flourish. You can be consistently victorious in life and also be a kingdom influencer! The key is that you agree to be disciplined. Why choose to be a lone-ranger, an isolated soldier in the battles of life, when God has made provisions for your life-support system?

Your submission to divine making determines your solid standing and your sending by God. It is the **disciples** of today that become **apostles** tomorrow. Your formation is the pre-cursor to your commissioning by Heaven. The stones that yielded to the processing machines at the quarry site are the ready lively stones for the building of God's temple.

Therefore, beloved, make hay while the sun shines. A wise son gathers in the harvest during summer. And this is your summer time! Put yourself into this timely incubation, so that the egg of your greatness can hatched shortly after. Discipleship is for you, **now!**