

TRANSFORMATION: DISCIPLESHIP

STUDY 13: TRAINING METHODS OF JESUS, PAUL & PAULO FRIERE

All development programs and churches have a training function. It is therefore helpful in this series of studies, to explore the training goals and style of Jesus and Paul to see how their methods can help to prepare people for effective ministry. A comparison is made with a modern Christian community educator, Paulo Friere.

Becoming Disciples

1) Use of the Term. Of all the terms used in the New Testament of followers of Jesus by far the most common is the word "disciple." It appears more than 260 times. By contrast the most common word used today, "Christian," appears only three times (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16)

2) A Common Teaching Method. Teaching by discipling was a common educational and leadership pattern. AT the time of Jesus other groups of disciples followed John the Baptist (Mt. 9:15; John 1:35; Acts 19:1-5), the Pharisees (MK. 2:8; Luke 5:33), and Moses (John 9:28)

3) Jesus' Choice of Disciples. The disciples of Jesus were ordinary men. In his essay "The Twelves Men" dealing with the British jury, the late G.K. Chesterton wrote,

Whenever our civilization wants a library to be cataloged, or a solar system discovered, or any other trifle of that kind, it uses up its specialists. But when it wishes anything done which is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing around. The same thing was done, if I remember right, by the founder of Christianity.

Jesus indeed chose and trained 12 ordinary men.

4) Jesus' Choice of 12. Choosing 12 was symbolic. It was an acted parable in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. By His choice of twelve men, the number of the tribes of Israel, Jesus proclaimed his intention to create a new Israel, and whenever he appeared with His 12 men the number itself would say, to people with insight, "This is the Messiah and the new People of God."

Responses:

1. Read one of the gospels and note every occurrence of the word "disciple."
2. How many disciples do you think John the baptist, the Pharisees, and Moses had?
3. List the known professions of the disciples.
4. What other numbers of disciples are mentioned in Luke 10:1 and Acts 1:15?

Making Disciples

In Matthew's gospel the Great commission was the "make disciples." This last command of Jesus contrast with the first, to become disciples by "following Jesus." The word disciple literally means "one who learns." Prof T.W. Manson says that in Aramaic the word meant

"apprentice" rather than "student"; "their discipleship was not matriculation in a rabbinical school but apprenticeship to the work of the Kingdom" (Hunter, 1964, p. 60).

The method by which to produce disciples was by going, baptizing, and teaching. IN Greek these three words are participles while "making disciples" is an imperative. The conclusion then, is that making disciples is the goal; going, baptizing and teaching are the means of achieving it.

Write out the five statements of the great commission in Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:27, 49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8.

Note that the scope is to all nations, the power is the Holy Spirit, it is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus, and it will be by proclamation and demonstration. Quote references for the above points. What other points should be made from these verses?

Learning from Jesus

Peter the disciple, said of Jesus, "He left us an example that we should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). This can apply not only to personal faith and actions but also to training policies. This study focuses on four key features of Jesus training style.

1) A Limited Number. Jesus' teaching ministry was offered at three levels:

a) Individual enquirers with whom He took time to discuss particular issues. Some of these were sympathetic and genuine, others antagonistic and asking questions only to find fault with Jesus argument. (Lk. 10:25ff; 11:1, 37, 45; 12:13; 13:23; 18:18).

b) The disciples. As time progressed Jesus increasingly concentrated on explaining His ideas and actions to the 12 disciples. (Lk. 9:18; 16:8-9, 22; 17; 18:1).

c) The crowds. People came from all the towns and villages to hear Jesus. In Jerusalem they lined the streets and hailed Him as the Messiah. The sick and their families sought Him out to get His help. (Lk. 4:31; 6:17; 7:24; 8:1; 12:54; 15:1; 20:1,9).

The most strategic of these groups was clearly the second. A small number of special learners who stayed with Him during His three year ministry. This small group He redesignated "apostles" meaning "sent ones" (Luke 6:13), and in them He invested the most time: of them, 11 out of 12 proved successful.

Application:

1. How many people does your training program target? List programs and numbers.
2. What are the advantages of small groups over crowd and individuals?

Case Study: The TAFTEE Pattern. Approximately 25 years ago theological extension was pioneered in Asia by a group in India. Today the program has 600 students working in degree level courses and 3,000 students working at certificate level. Courses are written in a programmed learning format and studied by students individually in their homes. Each week the students come together for a small group discussion of issues, sharing of problems, and conducting of small tests. The tutorial group is a vital part of the educational process and

undoubtedly contributes to the success and continuity of the students.

2 A Long Period. Jesus took three years of full-time input to train His disciples. If the best teacher in the world needed that much time, how much more we must need! Yet most training programs in the Christian development field are much shorter.

List programs you know and their length Note: In preparation for the Wheaton '83 conference on "The Church in Response to Human Need" the World Evangelical Fellowship prepared a book describing training courses in Christian community development. World Vision has also produced a list. Readers interested in training in these fields could consult these sources.

Case Study: EFICOR Training Unit:

Aware of the shortcomings of existing programs which ranged from one day seminars to three month courses, the EFICOR Training Unit launched an new program in 1984. In a one month intensive course some well qualified church members and pastors with experience in, and commitment to serving the poor, and to integrating faith and action, were trained. That theoretical foundation was however only the beginning of a two year commitment and relationship during which period Training Unit staff visited them on location, and they returned at 6 month intervals for reflection and skills training. Through this educational process it is anticipated that deeper and more appropriate learning will take place.

Why do you think Jesus kept the disciples with Him for three years? What implications does this have for your training program.

3) An Action-Reflection Process. The third notable feature of Jesus' training method was that it was certainly not a formal classroom experience. The countryside was their lecture room, life experiences their curriculum, demonstrations their object lessons, and dialogue their learning process. They went everywhere with Jesus, saw what He did and listened to what He said. Then they sought clarification of points they didn't understand. After some time they themselves went out to preach and heal and then regrouped to discuss their success and failures. Education theory suggests that people remember 10 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, and 90 percent of what they do. Draw a diagram or bar chart to represent these proportions.

Most Bible and theological colleges need to re-examine their curricula in light of the teaching method of Jesus. To do so would reduce the formal classroom time and increase the field experience where values and beliefs are explored and explained in face to face contact with the community. It is in this direct encounter with people and ideas that truly relevant learning is most likely to take place. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

The structure John's gospel demonstrates a close link between event and explanation and suggests that the deepest spiritual truths about Jesus are illustrated by what He did.

Reference
Chapter 4

Event
Meeting the woman
at the well

Explanation
Jesus can give
living water.

Chapter 6

Chapter 8/9

Jesus heals the
blind man.

He is the Light of
the World.

Chapter 10

Jesus is the Good
Shepherd.

Chapter 11

Lazarus is raised
from the dead.

Chapter 15

Cultivating a
vineyard

Jesus is the

Fill in the spaces. What actions have you, your Church, or your program taken which have most effectively raised spiritual questions and created opportunities for explanation of the gospel? What issue-raising actions could you take?

Paulo Friere's Philosophy of Education:

In the 1970s Paulo Friere, a Catholic priest working in South America and grappling with issues in an oppressive society, began to define education in a new way. His book Pedagogy of the Oppressed suggests that the purpose and process of true education is:

1. The humanization of relationships between individuals and groups in society.
2. The liberation of oppressed and oppressor.
3. To change the unjust structures of society.
4. The expression of love.
5. To enable the emergence of a new holistic humanity.
6. Participation of the oppressed in their own development.
7. The change from being objects to being subjects of events.
8. Involvement in reflection and action (praxis) on the dehumanizing structures and relationships of their society or situation.
9. Freedom from low self esteem, hopelessness, dependence and dehumanizing models.
10. The commitment to struggle for liberation.
11. The process of dialogue.
12. The acceptance of responsibility for themselves.
13. Partnership of educator and learner in discovery of reality.
14. Affirmation that people are in the process of becoming.
15. Recognition of people as historical beings, creators of their own history.
16. Is prophetic and hopeful regarding the future.
17. Emphasis community rather than individuality.
18. It stresses being rather than having more.

Which items in the above list seem to agree with the training approach of Jesus? Share reasons for your choices.

Paul's People Development Program

There is a feature of Paul's approach to discipling from which to learn, and that is his deep concern for people. This is shown in three ways:

1) Choice of Colleagues. Paul didn't like to be alone. He took people with him on his great missionary journeys. His first companion was the gentle Barnabas, his next young John Mark, then Titus and Silas, and for a long time Timothy. Where he stopped to teach he gathered co-workers and disciples. In the introductions to his letters Paul identifies several companions. Who is with him when he writes his letters? (See 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor.1.2; Gal. 6:21; Phil.1.1; Col.1.1; 1&2 Thes. 1.1; 2 Tim. 3:12; Philemon 23:24)

2) Frequency of Correspondence. Of the New Testament writers Luke with his history of Jesus and the early Church and Paul with his letters to congregations and individuals are the most prolific. Next comes John with his gospel and the three short letters and vision and then the other gospel writers, Matthew and Mark. Finally there is James, Peter, Jude, and possibly Apollos.

Paul had a short life: he was killed in Rome with the outbreak of persecution in A.D. 53 or 54. Into his 20 to 25 years of Christian service he squeezed extensive traveling, constant speaking, and frequent letter writing. Because of their deeply spiritual content these letters were valued and preserved by the early church until about 150 A.D. When the New Testament canon was fixed with Paul's letters included.

Paul's concern for people shows through on every page. The one who defined the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22:23) and wrote the sublime appeal for the supremacy of love in all human relationships (1 Cor. 13) was not content to speak in general terms. All his letters are filled with personal references, especially the endings.

Look up Romans 16 and note how many people are mentioned. What is the total number of individuals plus groups mentioned? Now look at the conclusions of Paul's other letters to see how this care for individuals and their needs continues to be his great concern.

3) Recognition of People's Potential. Paul was a people-builder. He exercised a constant ministry of encouragement. The following three examples illustrate this.

a) Mark. The passage in Acts 15 which describes the dispute between Paul and Barnabas over Mark seems to suggest the opposite. It would be easy to conclude that Paul was judgmental, rigid, and unforgiving. It is true that he did not travel with Barnabas after that point but at the end of the letter to Philemon there is a pleasant surprise. The writers of the two of the gospels are in Rome with Paul – one is Mark and the other is Luke. It is certain that Luke had not written his account of the life of Jesus at that time and likely that Mark had not done so either.

It is quite possible that the encouragement to produce these invaluable aids to a better understanding of Jesus came from Paul. The actual writing of course, was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul obviously did not regard Mark's early failure as permanent. He practiced as well as preached, forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a ministry of rehabilitation and the creating of new beginnings for people who have failed.

Can you quote experiences or examples of such a ministry?

b) Sosthenes: Acts chapter 18 includes a description of one of the campaigns to silence and sentence Paul. It was led by Sosthenes, leader of the synagogue and the Jewish community in Corinth. Thinking that the newly appointed governor Gallio, who had a reputation for impartiality would agree with them, the Jews presented a case against Paul. Gallio however dismissed the case as a local religious dispute not a judicial matter and when Sosthenes came out of the court room he was stoned, probably by his fellow Jews for losing the case or possibly by a crowd sympathetic to Paul. At that point Paul and Sosthenes were clearly enemies.

When, some time later, Paul writes to the Corinthian church he conveys greetings from himself "and our brother Sosthenes". The probability is that it is the same Sosthenes as in Acts 18. So Sosthenes, like Paul, who once tried to stamp out Christianity and imprison or kill its leaders, had become a Christian. More than that he is a special friend and colleague of the man he tried to kill and is commended to the church he tried to destroy (See 1 Cor. 1:1)

What attitude would Paul and the Christians in Corinth need to demonstrate to achieve this result?

c) Onesimus. The final example from Paul's life is even more dramatic. When Paul was in Rome he lived under house arrest in the refugee quarter of the city. People from all corners of the empire congregated there hoping to find excitement, employment, and anonymity in the crowded city. One such person was Onesimus who had stolen money and run away from his master. In Rome he meets Paul who tells him not only of the grace, forgiveness, and dignity to be found through faith in Jesus but also of his responsibility to return to his master, seek reconciliation and restoration, and resume his duties. To assist Onesimus, Paul writes a letter of commendation and offers to refund the stolen money. He appeals to Philemon to treat Onesimus as a Christian brother. At that point the New Testament part of the story ends.

But it is not the end of the story. Many years later Ireneaus tells the story of the church in Ephesus, the largest Christian congregation in the world. After Paul's ministry there for two years which got the church established, the saintly apostle John settled there and built the church up into a thriving worshipping and witnessing congregation. Then John was exiled to the Island of Patmos and the church was leaderless. They searched around for a suitable replacement and chose Onesimus. A runaway slave became the second permanent minister of the largest church in Asia. This is a remarkable testimony to the value-changing power of Christianity. And the process began with Paul.

From any of the previous studies on transformation identify biblical principles which made such an event possible. Now return to the summary of Friere's qualities of an educator and note points of agreement and disagreement between him and Paul.

Current Reflections on Discipleship

Two quotations from Orlando Costas aid reflection on what discipleship really involved.

a) Though Jesus' invitation to "follow" sounded similar to that of the rabbis of his day, it was, nevertheless, quite different. Juan Stam has listed seven basic differences between following Jesus and following rabbis.

1) Following Jesus was by invitation only, whereas with the rabbis it was by request. The rabbinic disciples chose their teachers rather than the teacher choosing the disciples, as was the case with Jesus.

2) Becoming a disciple of Jesus involved a practical education that encompassed one's entire way of life. With the rabbis, it was purely intellectual, theoretical, and abstract.

3). Jesus' invitation to follow was grounded on a personal relationship. That of the rabbis was basically doctrinal.

4) Following Jesus was a gift of grace. The disciple was not required to pay Jesus' salary. With the rabbis, it was in some sense a commercial enterprise, since their disciples were obligated to pay for their instruction.

5) The discipleship of Jesus demanded absolute commitment. The rabbis did not and could not make such a demand.

6) With Jesus, life of discipleship was a communal reality; he and his disciples constituted a closely knit fellowship. With the rabbis, there was hardly any room for fellowship.

7) The discipleship of Jesus was permanent. The invitation was for life. No one could, therefore, expect to "graduate". In the case of the rabbis, it was a temporary learning program. The goal of the rabbinic disciples was to become rabbis themselves, once the training period was over, whereas with the disciples of Jesus, they were expected to go on learning from, depending upon, and serving their Master.

Thus, although there were many similarities between Jesus and the rabbis, the contrasts were far greater. Little wonder that those who heard him "were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes "(Mk. 1:22).

b) To teach obedience to Jesus Christ in all things is the great challenge of the world evangelization today. Everywhere we go, we are confronted with the question of what kind of disciples we are making if there is no noticeable change in their mental structure and lifestyle; if their energies are interiorized and exhausted in intro-church activities rather than in the transformation of their history; if they make no effort to related to reality; if they leave Christ out of important areas of life – like economics and politics- and reduce him to the realm of the private self or the religious club. We need to call into question discipleship programs that shun the imperative of obedience and put their emphasis on shallow slogans, that major on abstract truths and minor on concrete actions, that stress commitment to Christ without demanding the fruits of repentance, that under-score "baptism without church discipline", that permit "communion without confession' and restitution.

Disciple-making is an indispensable criterion for evaluating missional faithfulness. One way to evaluate our missional program is to ask three questions: (1) Is it leading woman and men to follow Jesus at each crossroad of life? (2) Is it enabling them to participate in Jesus' mission in the world? (3) Is it teaching them to obey him in all things? Following, Participating, and obeying. These are marks of authentic discipleship and of a faithful Christian mission. (1979, p. 15, 24).

Teacher Student Relationships:

The relationship between teacher and student can be depicted in four ways:

Insert Figure pg 288

Which pattern do you think Jesus, Paul and Paulo Friere model is? Which pattern is most typical of your educational experience? See figure 13.1 for an exercise which would explore the implication of these patterns of education. Role play each situation to demonstrate the difference. Alternately share experiences of discipling as an instructor or learner.

Conclusion

This concluding quotation shows how different Jesus' criteria for choosing disciples was from the way secular society thinks. Discuss the following imaginary report.

MEMORANDUM

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafter Carpenter Shop
Nazareth
From: Jordan Management Consultants
Jerusalem.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for the management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; we have not only run the results through our

computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yourselves
Jordan Management Consultants
(Author Unknown)

Insert Figure 13.1 pg 290