

Community Church Huddersfield
Roots of Restoration Notes

Session 9 - Shepherding and Discipleship, Continued

1. Session 8 established:

- a. the principle of delegated, spiritual authority,
- b. its importance in God's purpose and in his created order
- c. how that should affect our attitude towards those in authority
- d. the value and blessing of a submissive heart

2. This session seeks to address more the actual practice of discipleship and of building a community of disciples.

- a. **Shepherding** is carried out by shepherds (elders)
 - i. We are under their authority by being members of the church
 - ii. They are accountable to God for us (Heb.13:17)
 - iii. We should submit to and obey them (Heb.13:17)
 - iv. Shepherding is partly fulfilled through discipling but you don't have to be a shepherd in order to disciple others
- b. **Discipling** and being disciplined is something that we are all involved with
 - i. We choose to allow a person/people access into our lives to 'admonish' us (see below for the meaning of this word)
 - ii. We make ourselves accountable to them
 - iii. We should be open to their counsel, correction etc.
- c. We want to build **a community of disciples**, where
 - i. All members honour those who are over them in the Lord, submit to them from the heart, follow their lead and are open to their personal challenge and encouragement
 - ii. Each is open to 'being disciplined' by others and is seeking to disciple others
 - iii. Each regards themselves as their brother's keeper (Gen.4:1-16), i.e having a degree of responsibility to them, and so seeking to help, encourage, spur on, restore etc. all members of the family (see Galatians 6:1).
 - iv. Conflicts between members of the family are resolved quickly in a godly and gracious way
 - v. Making disciples extends to reaching the lost, and beginning the process of discipleship there.

3. Let's first remind ourselves of the importance of the church being a shepherded community

- a. See Session 8 notes for the benefits of being truly shepherded:

- i. Provison
 - ii. Protection
 - iii. Refreshing
 - iv. Liberty
 - v. Security
 - vi. Revelation
 - vii. Victory
 - viii. And more...
- b. When Jesus saw the helpless crowds he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt.9:36/Mark 6:34).
- i. A crowd is unshepherded
 - ii. A true community is shepherded (see Numbers 27:17)
 - iii. A crowd becomes a community through shepherding

4. The purpose of discipleship

- a. The purpose of God is stated in different ways in the Bible but one is through the prophetic promise given to Abraham to bless all the world through his offspring (Gen.12:3; Gal.3:7-9)
- b. Gen.18:17-19 teaches us that that this purpose is fulfilled through the process of discipleship
 - i. Discipleship is like parenting - training our children, passing on an inheritance of life
 - ii. Discipleship is the only method that the Bible gives us for fulfilling the purpose of God
- c. Another way in which the purpose of God is stated is through what has been called the creation mandate (Gen.1:28)
 - i. God did not just mass produce people; he set in place a process of reproduction.¹
- d. The great commission is like a restatement of the creation mandate (Matt.28:18-20)
 - i. Note that we are called not to make converts but to make disciples²
 - ii. We are called to make disciples of all nations because discipling is God's method of fulfilling his purpose
- e. Discipleship does not just produce lots of Christians or blessed people, but it brings a people to maturity (Col.1:18)³

¹ *Disciples are not produced wholesale. They are produced one by one.....* (Oswald Sanders)

² *"..salvation and discipleship are so closely related as to be indivisible. They are not identical, but as with siamese twins they are joined by a tie which can be severed only at the price of death."* (A.W.Tozer)

³ *"Discipleship is not to bring people into legalism but into liberty. It is not to manipulate them but to mature them spiritually. Discipleship is not to dominate people but to develop them to their full potential for God. It is not to restrict them but to release them into their own ministry."* (Herbert Harrison)

5. Principles of discipleship

- a. There is a cost to being a disciple that ultimately means **the sacrifice of our independence** (Luke 14:25-35)
 - i. How we deal with offences, disappointments, circumstances, other people's success etc. show us how much of our old self is still alive and kicking!!
- b. Discipleship involves **learning in the context of a yoke** (Matthew 11:28-30)⁴
- c. **Consistent application of the teachings of Jesus** is the mark of a true disciple (John 8:31)
- d. A disciple has **to be teachable**
 - i. We have to ask ourselves do we have a teachable attitude or are we 'know-it-alls'? How well do we receive instruction, counsel, correction and rebuke from others?
- e. Discipling will involve:
 - i. Instruction
 - ii. Demonstration
 - iii. Impartation
 - iv. Revelation
 - v. Formation

6. The practice of discipleship

- a. We are part of **a community of disciples**
 - i. We are our brothers' keepers! (see Gen.4:1-16)
 - ii. Disciples gather together to restore one another (Acts 14:8-20; Heb.10:25)
 - iii. Note the gatherings are to:
 - Encourage one another
 - Spur one another on (see v.24)
 - To keep the common focus on their aim/vision – the day approaching!
- b. Discipling adds to general teaching, through **one-to-one** teaching and **admonishing**
 - i. Jesus began to shepherd the crowd through teaching 'many things.'
 - ii. We can't cover all that each individual needs to be taught through teaching programmes
 - iii. At the essence of discipling is 'teaching to obey' (Matt.28:20)
 - iv. Paul taught generally and one-to-one (Acts), as did Jesus.⁵

⁴ "Discipleship is learning in the context of a yoke. The lack of yoke has been a sad feature of much individualistic evangelicalism, where people learn what they want, when they want, if they want." (David Tomlinson, *Restoration*, July-August, 1980)

- v. Paul told Timothy to do this (2 Tim.4:2; 1 Tim. 1:3, 4:11, 6:17-18)
 - vi. It was one of the ways that Paul sought to bring people to maturity in Christ (Col.1:18)
 - vii. Our shepherds will do this (1 Thess.5:12)
 - viii. We can all do this (Rom.15:14; 1 Thess.5:14; 2 Thess.3:14-15)
 - ix. Eli is an example of one who failed to admonish/discipline his sons (1 Sam.3:13) with tragic consequences
 - x. Too many Christians want teachers but not fathers (1 Cor.4:15)
 - xi. We are illegitimate if we are not prepared to be fathered or disciplined (Heb.12:8)
 - xii. A discipleship relation can grow whereby we have sons in the faith, though we should avoid the danger of a 'gruesome twosome.'
- c. Being committed to building a community of disciples means being **prepared to make ourselves accountable**
 - d. This means that we will be **willing to receive correction** and even rebuke, as well as teaching and encouragement
 - i. Will involve being corrected but this is not an end in itself.⁶
 - e. It also means that we will dealing with conflict within the community in a right way (Matt.5:23-24;18:15-17).

7. Priorities in discipleship

- a. Don't just live for your self
- b. Have a submissive and teachable heart
- c. Be willing to give people access into your life
- d. Learn how to respond to being admonished
- e. Be willing to give time to people⁷
- f. Have the courage and commitment to disciple others⁸
- g. Be committed to building community of disciples rather than to be just one of a crowd.

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Huddersfield July 2008

⁵ Matt.8:25-6; Mark 8:32-3; 10:13-14; 14:37-8; 16:14; Luke 9:54-5; John 18:10-11

⁶ "As correction succeeds it does itself out of a job!" (Arthur Wallis, *Restoration*, May-June 1984, p.32)

⁷ "If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellowmen, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity." (Daniel Webster)

⁸ *If I had my life to live over again I would live it to change the lives of men. Until you have done that you haven't done anything.* (Warren Webster)