

DISCIPLES

By Bob Young

[I recently saw an interesting acronym for the word “disciples”. I have expanded it in the article below.]

D--I am a disciplined person.

Can an undisciplined person be a disciple? Note the connection between the two words. Discipline is participation in a learning process; a disciple is a learner. The modern church has all but lost the connection between discipleship and disciplined living. The spiritual disciplines help us restore direction, purpose, and order to our lives. At the heart of discipleship is disciplined living.

Disciplined living keeps me focused. Disciplined living helps me avoid distractions and multiplied meaningless and useless activities. Disciplined living distances me from everything that threatens to undo my Christ commitment.

I--I am a person of integrity.

Discipleship demands integrity. Discipleship is not possible when one part of my life lines up with my commitment to Christ but other parts do not. My integrity gives me 24/7 consistency.

Integrity keeps me from living life in separated compartments. All that I am and have is committed to one purpose—following Jesus as a disciple. This singleness of heart is called integrity. It does not remove joy from my life; it is the source of my joyful sense of purpose and gives meaning to my life. Integrity brings wholeness to my life.

S--I am willing to serve humbly.

In a world focused on rights more than responsibilities, getting more than giving, and being served more than serving, imitating Jesus involves service. Humble service is not the norm in today’s world—nor, unfortunately, in today’s church. Disciples (learners) who are genuinely interested in becoming like the one they call Lord (teacher) will learn how to serve humbly.

Humble service makes my life about something bigger than I am. Life is not about what I want, need, or desire. Life is not about the things I can enjoy or experience or do. Life is about others. Jesus calls us to take up the towel and the basin. Jesus calls us to consider others above self.

C--I am part of a community.

Christianity is not lived in a vacuum, nor is it lived in isolation. Discipleship implies a role and a responsibility in the community of disciples. Discipleship implies relationship. God holds me accountable for my place in the community of faith, my friendship community, and my family.

The possibility of this community experience is what makes us human. Humanity is not fully realized apart from a committed community where all care for and depend on all others.

I--I live life with intensity and passion.

Disciples never lose the passion. The Spirit within me causes me to recognize the eternal importance of what Jesus left his disciples on this earth to do. Discipleship demands passionate

intensity to accomplishing his purpose and will. The passionless life is not the disciple's life. Intensity and passion are essential for discipleship.

Passion avoids apathy; intensity avoids mediocrity. Is it ever possible to say to a Christian, "You are too serious about your Christianity"? Is it ever possible that a Christian is too intense?

P--I am willing to keep on keeping on, to work and wait for God to provide the increase.

The acronym uses the word "perseverance." As a disciple, I am willing to keep on when I cannot see the results or when the results are not obvious or clear. I will not quit.

Perseverance is a part of discipleship. The one who will not persevere is not a disciple. The one who turns back has quit learning and has quit following.

L--I am committed to loving, devoted relationships—with God and other people.

Jesus connected discipleship and love—we can do no less. Jesus said that love is a mark of discipleship. Jesus taught about a love as strong and intense as his love. Disciples love like Jesus loved. A tall order indeed!

Love focuses my service, my life in the community, my intensity and my perseverance. Love finds expression in these elements of my discipleship as these characteristics allow me to express my love.

E--I seek to live life with excellence.

There is no such thing as a mediocre Christian. There is no mediocre discipleship. It is all or nothing—excellence or emptiness. Paul urges the Philippians to choose the things excellent. It is easy to fill life by doing good things and to miss the best, the most excellent.

Am I ever satisfied with less than excellence? Am I ever willing to settle for second-rate? I must ask these questions about my devotional life, my walk with God, my quiet time, my prayer life, and every aspect of how I follow Jesus as a devoted disciple.

S--I live sacrificially.

Jesus' sacrifice is the essence of who he is and what he did. Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice. Disciples sacrifice for the cause.

As a disciple of Jesus, I also will live sacrificially. This includes all of the possible antonyms: I will not live extravagantly; I will not live selfishly, I will live for others. Sacrificial living is out of vogue in our contemporary world, but no disciple lives for herself or himself. Discipleship is ultimately about others.