



## WOW: Word Of the Week

### WON

August 30, 2023

WERE YOU WON? In many places, we have a problem. We are trying to disciple people who have yet been WON. When evangelism falters, is incomplete, or is short-circuited, discipleship is a challenge.

There is an increasing tendency to equate baptism with being WON for the Lord. Many are baptized who have not been WON. Evangelism is the process of winning people over for Jesus. Being WON means that Jesus is King, Lord, guide, director, owner of life. Discipleship naturally follows. Two different themes—interrelated, connected.

Discipleship depends on evangelism. The Great Commission in Matthew commands Jesus' followers to "make disciples, as they are going." Interestingly, the word is not *euangelizo*, to evangelize. The word is *matheteuo*, to teach. Our translations reflect the truth that disciples are learners. Make learners. The word *matheteuo* can mean to enroll learners or to identify students. The participles that follow describe the process: baptizing and continuing to teach Jesus' commands (*didasko*).

Let us simplify. To talk biblically about discipling someone, one must talk about continuing the teaching. But before the teaching can continue, a person must be won for Jesus. That person must hear the gospel and be baptized. The gospel message demands commitment, cross-bearing. The gospel message must include the necessity of commitment, counting the cost, not turning back. Jesus described three groups who "cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:25-33).

The last command Jesus gave before concluding his earthly ministry and ascending to the Father was to make disciples of the nations. Paul writes about becoming all things to all people in order to win as many as possible (1 Cor. 9:19-22). Paul equates winning people to Jesus and salvation. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. The saving power of the gospel must be proclaimed and accepted. That is evangelism. That is how people are WON. After baptism, teaching must continue. Learning continues. Disciples. Discipleship.

Spiritual "crib deaths" are too common. As we share the Good News, let us make clear that the regenerated spiritual life that comes by washing is not the end but only the beginning (Tit. 3:7). Baptism demands growth in discipleship. The renewal of the Holy Spirit demands spiritual growth, teaching, discipleship.

And remember! Effective discipleship begins in evangelism that genuinely WINS people to Jesus!