

# Discipleship

## Part 1

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Duration	00:46:33
Online version	<a href="https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/fw022/discipleship">https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/fw022/discipleship</a>

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[00:00:01] This subject of the disciples and their call and training and so on is a very large one and I don't know how we're going to cover all the various aspects of it in the short time that is available to us. However, it's good for us to read the Word of God and seek the direction and help of the Holy Spirit so that some question may be left for us as to what really a disciple of the Lord is so that we too might be marked by the features that belong to a disciple. First of all, we might ask, what is a disciple? And the answer is simple, a person who is taught, a person who not only is taught, but who endeavors to put into practice the things that he has learned. [00:01:01] In the ancient world there were many philosophers and they gathered around them their disciples and their disciples invited the teachings and not only did they invite the teachings, but they drew on many of the mannerisms of the teachers so that they were proud to be called disciples of their respective teachers. Now when we come to the Scriptures, I think this principle holds good and what a wonderful teacher the disciples of the New Testament had, our Lord Jesus Christ. And what wonderful features they saw in him and they copied him, imitated him in the true sense of the scriptural world. And this is what we want to learn for ourselves, how to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus. Now we ought to say when we speak about the disciples, we generally think of [00:02:06] the twelve. And we try to think of them as uniquely the disciples of the Lord, in a most wonderful way. Three and a half years with him, seeing the things he did, hearing the things he taught, seeing him pray and so on, what a wonderful compressed time it was for those favorite twelve. Unfortunately, one got no benefit at all from the company of the Lord. But we do think of the twelve uniquely as the disciples of the Lord. But if we read the New Testament carefully, we'll find that there were many, many more disciples, many more. In fact, you remember the Lord sent out seventy, two by two, he sent them out to do his will. And we'll [00:03:01] find many, many other occasions where we can see that apart from the twelve, there were many who were called disciples of the Lord. Now when we come to the Acts of the Apostles, we find believers, persons who accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, who were baptized and followed in the Apostle's doctrine, and then in the teaching of the Apostle Paul, were described as disciples. And so we have every right to approach the scripture with this in mind, that through infinite grace, we in our day are privileged to be disciples of the Lord. Now if we want to get a true picture of what a disciple is, then obviously we turn to the Word of God and we see how they were called by the Lord himself, and how they reacted to the call. Because we have to be sure [00:04:07] of this, that although uniquely they were the twelve, the way they were called, the way they reacted, is relevant for us today. That although the Lord is in glory, he did cause individually, and we are responsible to react to that call, just as those early disciples did. Now tonight, very briefly, I want to go over these four portions that we've read from each of the Gospels, to indicate how the stamp of the Lord's person is very distinctly seen upon those persons who answer to his call. We know that each Gospel presents the Lord Jesus Christ in a very definite way. Matthew presents him as the king, Mark as the servant, Luke as the true

man here for God, [00:05:12] and John as the one who was God, coming into manhood, and here representing God in the fullest possible sense, and displaying all that God is. Now if you remember these things, I think they'll give us some help as to see the way in which the disciples were called, and to see the way they reacted to that call. Well, first of all, in Matthew, the king calls.

Well, we know the king is the one who represents absolute authority. There is no such thing as a constitutional monarch in the Scriptures as far as the kingship of Christ is concerned. [00:06:02] His kingship is one of absolute authority that will not tolerate any refusal. And so we can see at the outset that those men heard a call of authority, and receiving that call, they obeyed, and they followed the Lord. Now I believe this is the same today, dear brethren. The Lord has the right to call us. Thank God he has. We've heard the call in the Gospel.

We've responded to that call. We have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior and as our Lord, and so here's the initial call, the call to himself, to be cleared from all that stood between us and God, and to be brought into a position where we can receive another call, [00:07:04] a call for service, to follow him, to represent him. Many of us say that we take up service on our own charges. Is Christian living optional? Do we just take it up and lay it down as we feel led to do so by our own minds and wills? Surely this is a poor picture of Christian living. If the Lord calls us by his wonderful grace and blesses us, and then calls us again into some particular form of service or representation for him, we are bound to obey, we are bound to maintain that as he gives us strength, and we are bound to continue in it until he says, lay it down. I suppose every person who is engaged in some form of Christian service [00:08:06] at some time or other feels the power of opposition or the pressure of circumstances or some other thing coming across his pathway that tempts him to give up. Instead, we've got to remember the divine call. If he calls us, only he can say to us, that's the end of your service, lay down your service. But if he doesn't say that, then we've got to continue. And we find when Paul is writing to young Timothy, no doubt the disciple of the Lord, the man of God, we hope to see something about him one of the evenings, he says, continue. Continue thou in the things that thou hast learned and has been assured of. Don't give up, keep going on. I'm sure when we see the [00:09:07] greatness and glory of Christ as the King, the one whose absolute authority over his subjects, we can see the wonder of this call. What a dignity was imparted to those four in the beginning of Matthew. Called away from the rest of the coming, called away from their relatives, called away from all that they had been accustomed to, perhaps enjoyed too, to follow him with unquestioning obedience. No sign of reluctance in their heart. They answered to the call, they followed, they obeyed. Dear brethren, I believe this is the call for each one of us. May be that you're not called to any great public service. May be that the service the [00:10:01] Lord calls us to is very obscure. Nevertheless, if he calls us, thank God for it, it's something to do with the King. And as loyal subjects, we will be ready to respond and do the things that mean much to him. Our little part is his plan. The Queen in the land, she has a Prime Minister, she has a government, but she has a host of servants who are working in other ways, in very small jobs, in obscure places, but they're all doing something for the good of the realm.

All doing something in connection with the administration. We know, of course, there's a large question mark against that today. I know they're trying the simple illustration to show [00:11:02] that there are those who are in prominent positions, and some in humble positions. But when the King calls us to do something for him, it's always extremely important, because it fits in with his plan, and he wants us to obey. I'm sure we've experienced occasions when the Lord has directed us to do something, and we've been very, very reluctant to answer to it, because we have known it would involve certain things in our lives, perhaps things that we were reluctant to give up. And because of

this call, we hesitate. We don't find that with these poor men. They obey instantaneously, instantaneously, and they follow the law. We spoke about the disciples of the philosophers [00:12:02] in ancient times. They considered an honor to be included in the school and listen to the learned philosopher. And so we do as Christians. I believe we ought to be impressed by the dignity of representing the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. The wonderful privilege of being his disciple, learning from him, doing his will, giving on his character, and so in this world, setting forth something for his pleasure and for his glory. I want to speak about this matter of following the Lord, because it's very, very important. I understand the Greek word means being in the same way. Now, that seems to be perfectly obvious, being in the same way.

[00:13:04] But then we know that many followers can follow certain objects and leaders and yet not be heart and soul with their leader. But it would seem that following in the New Testament indicates persons who are really heart and soul with the Lord. They are one with him. You remember when the men came to David in the cave, when he asked them, do you come into peace? They said, thy we are, David, and on thy side thou son of Jesse. There was no doubt at all that they were heart and soul with David. And I believe those men, and many others, as we read, when they followed Jesus, it indicated how thoroughly they were with him in mind and soul. I know as we read the gospels, [00:14:06] we find that they made many mistakes, but that didn't deter them from following. They kept following, and the Lord held them in the course, and he provided them with all that was necessary. And so they followed the Lord, and that's a great matter. We're not disciples of any great teacher in Christendom. We're not disciples of any particular company of believers. We are disciples of the Lord, and if we're going to be true disciples of the Lord, we must follow him. We must take on his title. We must listen to his teaching, and if we do, we'll become really true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we find that Peter asked the Lord a question, Lord, we've left all and followed thee? And the Lord said, all those who have left [00:15:08] all and followed me shall be aptly rewarded, not only in this world, but in the worlds to come. So, dear brethren, for the faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will encourage us by the hope of the reward. Now, don't let's follow the Lord for the reward. We follow the Lord because it's his will. He wants us to be his disciples, but as we follow him in the pathway of faith, then he's going to reward us in the time to come, and thank God at the present moment, as we serve him, he gives us ample reward by his presence, his joy, his encouragement, his help, and so to answer to the call of the Lord is something that's very rewarding. [00:16:04] To follow the Lord, it brings its own reward, its own blessing, its own encouragement. The Lord said, those who follow me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. There are many schools of philosophy today, many ideologies today. Not one of them has the light of life. Only those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ will have the light of life, and this is one of the benefits of answering to the call. Having life through being in the company of the Lord Jesus, his wonderful teaching, illuminating our pathway, making problems plain to us, indicating to us the course of this world, its doom, its judgment, its eventual blessing under Christ, and many other things of a personal character, he that follows me shall not walk [00:17:08] in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And the Lord said, those who follow him, those who serve him, those persons will be honored by his power. Here's another thing connected with the call. As we answer to it, as we follow the Lord, we'll be honored by the Father. And said the Lord, those who serve me and call me where I am, there also shall I serve you. Wonderful encouragement to follow the Lord, to be in the Lord's company, to know his presence, to receive all the encouragement and resource that he administered to us as we answer to the call. Let me say a word about the natural side, the relatives, the father and mother and so on, [00:18:07] that we find here, and leaving their votes, their deathly calling to follow the Lord Jesus. We want to make a claim that everyone receives a call of this kind. Thank God thousands have answered to this call and have left their homes and their loved ones and their callings and have

gone abroad to other lands to serve the Lord. We are very thankful for their devoted discipleship in connection with the Lord's interests. But then we're not all called to do this, but we can all be disciples and we can all put the Lord first in our lives and we can answer to the call in this way and follow the Lord wherever we are, at home, at work, at school, [00:19:01] wherever we are, we can be the Lord's disciples. But we believe in this case it was unique, these four men answering to the Lord. It must have been a wonderful sight to see the Lord Jesus at the coming of these men and just saying, come, come after me and I will make you officials of men. Or saying to another one, follow me. And without any hesitation they leave home and follow the Lord. Surely there must have been divine power in this, divine authority in the invitation and in the call, or that we might fear this today. That Christian living and Christian service is not an optional matter. It's a matter that's incumbent upon us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all obligated to listen to the [00:20:04] voice of the Lord and to follow him. The one who calls us has the right to our obedience.

When we come to Mark, we said at the outset that Mark is the gospel that presents the Lord Jesus as a servant.

I'm sure we all have heard that over and over again. Nothing new that you're hearing. And we know that everything was done instantaneously, that's the key word, in the gospel by Mark, immediately and on. If you look up at the concordance, Brian and I have been with the priest 41 times, this Greek word was used, indicating how everything was done. I won't say in a hurry, but when the Lord said that things [00:21:05] were to be done, they were done. Or when he tended to, when he acted in healing, the healing was instantaneous. There was no waiting period. I believe those who were called, who were called to be with him, to see how he did things, so that they too might follow his example. It's striking that the one who wrote this gospel was one who once embarked on service for the Lord and turned back. He didn't continue. He found it going too rough, too difficult, too many problems, and so he went back to the comfort of his home and all the comforts of the city of Jerusalem. And then, thank God, he would recover. And being recovered, the Spirit of God [00:22:02] used him to portray for us the servant who never went back, the servant who never failed, the servant who did everything right for his master, his God and Father. And so we find a wonderful portrayal of the Son of God as a servant in this world. And I believe the call of the disciples was that they might be with him in order to watch carefully how he did things and take character from him. I say this because there's one word included in the Gospel by Mark that we don't find in Matthew, and it's in verse 17, come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. I believe that word become indicates a progress, indicates a training period [00:23:01] that they would go through, and in the company of the Lord, they would notice how he did things, how he dealt with people, his manner of dealing with people, and all this would be invaluable to them when they were left here in testimony in this world when the Lord went back to glory. Now, there are many things for ourselves as disciples to learn from in the Word of God, and especially in the Epistles. Do you remember that wonderful chapter, the second chapter of Philippians, where Paul spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ as an example for us? Because he said, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, and then he went on to speak about the humility of the Lord. He humbled himself, and he went on to speak about the obedience of the Lord. [00:24:02] He was obedient unto the death of the cross, and so I believe the Lord's example is one that we can follow with this humility and obedience. It's a nauseating thing to see a Christian presumptuous, arrogant, overriding with his will and mind over others. It's not in keeping with the character of Christ, a disciple of the Lord, but to be humble, and so if we take character to the Lord, we'll be marked by this feature of humility. Not presuming to be somebody or something, but rather just seeming to be like the Lord, endeavouring to do the things that he did, and endeavouring to do them in the way that he did them. And then this matter of

obedience, [00:25:02] we've already spoken about it, and we feel the Lord Jesus Christ is a perfect example of obedience. Do you remember the Hebrew servant? He was the one who was obedient, he was a bond slave, his ear was pored through with the awl, and he was dedicated to the service of his master, he would be a servant forever. Obedient forever, no will of his own, and the Lord Jesus Christ was the true antitype of the Hebrew servant. Obedient, even though it meant death. And so the believer is called upon to emulate his teacher, and master, and lord, and be obedient. Do you remember John, in his epistle? He said, we ought to walk as he walked, and as we see the Lord Jesus Christ portrayed in the Gospels, we see that wonderful pathway, and then the believer is called upon [00:26:08] to follow that pathway, to emulate it. We ought to walk as he walked. You say, how can that be done? Thank God it can be done, because every disciple today has the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to do the things that Jesus did. That's wonderful. I'm not suggesting for one moment that we embark in the power of the Holy Spirit on a campaign of miraculous healing, and miraculous works as the Lord Jesus did, the raising of the dead, and so on. The era of the Apostles' power in this respect is gone. But thank God we can walk as he walked, in the way he blessed people, the way he was kind to people, the way he taught people, [00:27:06] the way he helped people. This is the pathway for the disciples today. In 1 John 3, 16, we find the Apostles saying that the Lord Jesus Christ loved us, and laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. The example of the Lord is that he went the full distance, laid down his life for the believer, and we, in our turn, ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. That's for the Christian company. What a challenge, dear brethren. Ever ready to shoulder responsibility in connection with the local company, or in connection with any Christian service that is brought to bear upon us. Ready to lay down our lives. We have a wonderful example of this in the first chapter of Philippians, [00:28:10] or was it the second chapter? And he was prepared to lay down his life in order to perform some service in the Christian company. He was a true representative of his teacher and master. He really took on the features of his teacher and Lord. And so we do, says John, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Then Peter, he says the Lord has left us an example that we should follow in his steps. Now, we know that we can never be perfect, like the perfect servant. We know that he is unique and infinitely beyond us in all his greatness and glory in his pathway. But the true disciple, as we said at the beginning, he not only implied the teaching of the master, [00:29:04] but he took on the mannerisms of the master. And all we want are these divine mannerisms. The way the Lord did things, the way he helped people. And Peter says we ought to walk as he walked. One last example. In John 13, the Lord stooped down and he washed the feet of his disciples.

What wonderful grace, what wonderful humility. He washed the feet of his disciples. And he said that he, their Lord and teacher, notice that, their Lord and teacher, had washed their feet and they were to wash each other's feet. He gave them the example, they were to follow that example. So dear brethren, discipleship is not only a question of going out and preaching and ministering [00:30:02] the work of God, thank God that's part of it. But discipleship, according to Mark, would be taking on the spirit of the master, imitating him, following him, and the impact of his life seen through us. This is what Paul says in Corinthians, bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal bodies. And now we come to the Gospel Bible.

We spoke about this on Saturday evening, a little, and we don't want to move over all we said, but we sought to present the truth connected with the disciple of the Lord, Lord, Master, the one who is the superintendent or overseer. And we believe this is what Luke would [00:31:05] represent, that the disciples of the Lord are to be under his hand, to be under his direction, so that he tells them what to do and where to go, what to say, and this is very important. I'm not going to go over the things I said on Saturday evening, except to say this, that we find the Lord saying to Satan, now you go up. But he

didn't send them out with a bunch, he sent them out two by two. Now we know in the Bible that two represents thousands. Adequate testimony. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, let the Lord be established.

And so we find he sent out two by two. Now the Lord did this. Now as the superintendent, [00:32:04] he has the right to do this. He can send them out. Then he says to two, now you go and you'll find a colt tied. Two of the disciples, they were sent to fetch this colt. And he says, if there's any question about it, just you say it to the master of the meeting room. And they went and they brought the colt back. Service given to two of the disciples, simple service. Didn't say go and cast out demons in a wonderful way. Don't go and raise the dead. He did give them that permission. But in this particular occasion, just a simple little task, go and find a colt tied and bring it here if we need it. Now this is the kind of thing that we must expect if we're going to be disciples of the Lord. After all, Paul didn't mind gathering sticks to make a fire to keep himself and the company warm. And if we're going to be disciples [00:33:03] of the Lord, we might have to do the most menial task amongst the people of God. But if it helps, that's a good thing. If it just encourages the saints in some way, that's a good thing. And then we find another two disciples. They're sent into the city and they're told, now do you see a man carrying a pitcher of water? You follow that man and he'll lead you to another room furnished and just get ready because you're going to have the Passover commemoration there. Well, he again was a simple service given to two disciples to go and do this simple task for the Master. But then if he tells us to do something simple, it doesn't mean that it's not very important. It is very important. It's something that the Master wants done. [00:34:02] And if he selects two of us to do that or even one of us to do something, we should be highly honored that we've been chosen to do something for the Lord. Maybe that he impresses you to go and visit an old sister or an old brother or to do some little task for them. Well, you say there's not much glory in that. No, there isn't. Thank God for something that helps and encourages an old saint to bring some joy to their heart. And it's the Lord who's the overseer who's directing us to do this kind of thing. And there are thousands of ways in which he can direct us to do something for himself. But you see, he's the overseer and he has the whole plan in mind. And he knows just what requires to be done. Thank God if we're available to do it. And as we find in all the portions that we have read, these persons, when they were asked to follow the Lord, they did so immediately. No question. [00:35:07] We come to this man, Levi. He's sitting at the receipt of custom and the Lord says to him, follow me. He left all, rose up and followed him. Perhaps we ought to say this, that to be a real disciple of the Lord today will involve some sacrifice on our part but in this world in which we live, there are a host of things that can come in and claim our attention. If we want to devote our lives to the Lord, we may have to learn to sacrifice some of these things, to give these things up in order to find time to pay attention to the interest of the Lord. Now, you'll find as we go on that the sacrifice is a real sacrifice. It becomes a [00:36:01] blessing because the things that we give up, that perhaps we hold very dear, we find that they've been hindering us from really enjoying something of the Lord and preventing us from serving the Lord effectively. They may have been simple things, perfectly legitimate, but nevertheless hindering us from devoting our time to the Lord's interests. And so there's no question on the part of the fishermen, no reluctance, they leave all and they follow him. Levi, the governor of the taxes, he leaves all too and he follows the Lord. Not only did he follow the Lord, he says, I want to make a feast for him. And so he made this feast and obviously many persons have been gathered in to get the gain of the Master's company. So Levi indicated very clearly [00:37:03] that he really desired the preeminence of his Lord and Master and teacher. A disciple ready to sacrifice, a disciple ready to use what he had for the sake of the Master. He brought in the Pharisees and others and he had this feast for the Lord, but I believe what lay behind it was he wanted other persons to be brought into contact with his Lord. Now lastly, for a few moments, in the Gospel by John. We said at the outset that this Gospel presents the Son of God, the Eternal Lord, the

Eternal Son coming into this world, becoming a man and displaying all that God is. No man had seen God at any time. The only begotten Son and the bosom of the Father, He had declared Him. [00:38:08] And without doubt, this is the most wonderful portrayal of the Son of God, the Gospel by John. It's so profound, all the language is so simple, and yet the truths that are brought before us are so profound. And I believe that here, it's not so much the authority of the teacher, nor really the example that he sets to his disciples, nor yet his overseership, it's the glory of his person. Wonderful thing that for any disciple today, to be attracted to this glorious person, the Son of God, in this world as a man, and now in glory today at the right hand of the Father. Here is the wonderful attraction in this glorious person that withdraws [00:39:04] to himself, that would turn us away from others, and so find us occupied with him. Here is John the Baptist, wonderful servant of God, the greatest born among women, and he and his disciples. And John taught his disciples, John taught his disciples how to pray, he taught them how to be baptized for the remission of their sins, he taught them many things, and here is John with two of his disciples, and John, he points to the Lord Jesus Christ, an endless sermon, he points to one greater than himself, and he says, behold, behold the Lamb of God. And his two disciples, they heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. They led John the Baptist, and they followed the Lord. [00:40:06] They followed a greater servant, an infinitely greater servant. Oh, how great he is. But there was a power of attraction in the Son of God that led them away from John, and they followed Jesus. Oh, dear brethren, I find this the most challenging feature of discipleship. Has my heart been sufficiently attracted by the Lord, so that I can follow him unquestioningly, and find in him the greatest attraction of all, that causes me to leave all else and follow him? This is set in what the Gospel of John prays. It's not Christ but something else. It's Christ alone. They followed him. Jesus then, when he saw them following, he says, what seek ye?

[00:41:06] They said unto him, where dwellest thou? And he said, come and see. And they abode with him that day. Can you imagine what kind of day that was for those two men, when for a whole day they were in the company of Jesus? Can you imagine what kind of day it was? I'm sure you can. Speaking to them for a whole day as only the Son of God could speak, telling them the most wonderful things, so gracious, and kind, and humble, and yet revealing to them things that they had never heard from John the Baptist. What a wonderful day it was. Do we know something of this? I'm sure we do. I'm sure we know something of going into the presence of the Lord. It may not be for a whole day. Maybe for a few fleeting moments, thank God, [00:42:05] for those moments that we can find in the presence of the Lord. I believe this is the very necessary feature of discipleship, to be alone with the teacher. Not serving, not casting out demons, not teaching, not handing on the multiplied loaves of fish.

The Lord multiplied them, gave them to the disciples, the disciples gave them to the crowd. No, not doing this kind of service, just in the company of the teacher himself. Wonderful blessing, and I believe this is a part of discipleship that we need so much in this world in which we live, when there are so many demands upon our time, just to find time to be in the company of the teacher. Those persons that we spoke of earlier, [00:43:01] those who followed Aristotle and the other philosophers of our day, they had to spend time in the company of the teacher. How could they learn if they weren't there? How could they enjoy the teaching if they weren't in the company of the teacher? And so we today, it is most important that if we are going to be true disciples of the Lord, to really hear the presence of the Lord and find his blessings. Now he comes down to Philip, he finds Philip, and he says to Philip, follow me. The same command that we've heard so often, follow me. The Lord saying these two words with authority and power, and hear it. And Philip, he says, he follows him, and he finds Nathanael.

[00:44:03] Now, I've tried to find the verification of what persons say that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. Maybe, I don't know. I've tried to find out how they arrived at this, but somehow or other I believe it's right, because Nathanael is found amongst the rest of the disciples at the end of his book, which would seem to indicate he was one of the twelve. Anyway, it's been suggested that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. Here we find Nathanael being called by the Lord, and what a wonderful call it was. What a wonderful experience that he had this experience of entering into the company of one who knew him, knew all about him, and this was impressed upon Nathanael's soul, and what he made this [00:45:04] wonderful statement, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel, and I believe that disciples, true disciples, have a right understanding of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not only that they're following, it's not only that they're teaching, it's not only that they're serving, they understand the greatness and glory of the person whom they follow, and so Nathanael is a disciple with a very distinct knowledge of the greatness and glory of the person of the Son of God. Now I know these remarks will be very sketchy. Time races on, and we haven't time to go into the things in detail, but I believe in some measure what we said is true, that in Matthew, the disciples were called by the authority of the Lord, and they were obedient to that call. In Mark, they were [00:46:05] called in order to see how he did things to emulate him, and in Luke, to be under his direction and overseen him, and in John, attracted by the glory of his person. I know, dear brethren, that we too can take on some of these features. We'll know the blessing that touches to be called to be the disciples of the Lord. May we know more about it.