

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (Lesson I)

The subject of discipleship is as old as the Bible. Although it hasn't always been called discipleship or looked the same as it does in the New Testament, the concept has been there. Discipleship is not limited to spiritual or religious leaders. Aristotle was a disciple of Plato who was a disciple of Socrates. There is a generational aspect to discipleship that is described by Paul the Apostle: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). The idea inherent in discipleship is the process of passing ideas from one person to another, and from one generation to another. Truth was passed from Paul to Timothy, to faithful men, to others. The Biblical idea of discipleship involves a process that includes instruction and modeling that passes on God's truth for living. Merrill Unger states, "The meaning is one who professes to have learned principles from another and maintains them on that other's authority." To the extent that a diligent disciple follows a conscientious leader, discipleship is effective. Through the centuries Biblical teaching and modeling became more specific in its objectives. When John the Baptist came along, his followers were called disciples (Matthew 9:14). Jesus' followers were called disciples (Matthew 5:1; 8:21). The Pharisees also had disciples (Matthew 22:16). Christ's death, resurrection, and His commission to preach that message is the basis of His followers being called disciples. Thus, those who believe in Him are frequently referred to as disciples.