

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 3)

Radical disciples were (and are) developed through rigorous training and strict regimens that most Christians are not willing to endure. Throughout church history the standard for making disciples has been the model Jesus used in training the Twelve Apostles. A. B. Bruce wrote a classic called, "The Training of the Twelve, Timeless Principles for Leadership Development." It is obvious from the sub-title that Bruce intended to present Jesus' discipleship plan as the paradigm for the church until the end of the church age. Another excellent volume is "The Master Plan of Evangelism" by Robert Coleman. In the introduction Paul S. Reese says, "The author's work, concentrating as it does on the pattern we see in our Lord and His disciples, is saturated with Scripture." This is one of the most excellent works on evangelism and discipleship. Coleman's teachings are valuable, yet he deals only with the plan of Jesus. Jesus' plan is not up for improvement, but He indicated that something greater would occur after He finished His work on earth. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12). Jesus revealed that the church would move forward with a model based upon the lasting presence of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit enables us to reach more and win more and disciple more than Jesus could in His lifetime. He finished His work, then He commissioned the 12 before ascending to glory, but it wasn't until Pentecost that their potential was realized. The church needs a paradigm for discipleship that realizes the limited potential of working with a limited few over a limited lifetime. At the end of Paul's ministry, he presented a discipleship paradigm designed to last until the end of the church age. At Ephesus, Paul jettisoned his usual synagogue plan for evangelism and discipleship, which was along the lines of what Jesus did. He moved to the School of Tyrannus where he taught the Scriptures every day. At the end of two years, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). What Paul could not do by himself, he accomplished by remaining in one place and sending out many trained disciples into places he could never go in his lifetime. Paul multiplied himself and his ministry in the world. This is the "Tyrannus" vision. It advanced Jesus' method of "the training of the twelve," and left us with a paradigm for today.