

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 6)

What exactly is discipleship? It is unfortunate such a question should have to be asked. To answer we must ask another question: What is a disciple? It is clear that the term "disciple" in the New Testament does not always refer to a follower of Jesus, or even a believer in Jesus. The "disciples" that Paul met in the city of Ephesus knew nothing about the Gospel or the Holy Spirit. They definitely were not disciples of Christ. Paul Ennes speaks to this: "A further problem...relates to a misunderstanding of the term "disciple." When Jesus called men to follow Him as disciples (cf. Luke 14:25-35), He was not calling them to salvation. It was a call to follow Him as a learner, which is the meaning of "disciple." Discipleship always follows salvation. It is never a part of it; otherwise grace is no longer grace. Furthermore, if discipleship is a condition of salvation, then so is baptism, because being baptized is a part of becoming a disciple" (Matthew 28:19-20). In the New Testament a distinction is made between believers and disciples. Discipleship involves three things: (1) Baptizing, (2) Teaching, (3) Obedience. After the Ethiopian eunuch believed he took the first step of becoming a disciple and was baptized (Acts 8:37). A disciple is a person who actively follows Jesus and obeys His commandments as he becomes aware of them. Baptism is the first command. A disciple is a person who makes a choice to be more than a believer. He chooses to learn and follow, to believe and obey.