

The Vineyard & The Husbandman

Part 4

Apostolic Discipleship

© 2019

W.D. Furioso

Edited by Frances Furioso

ACT publications

AT CHRIST'S TABLE

www.AtChristsTable.org

The Vineyard of the Lord

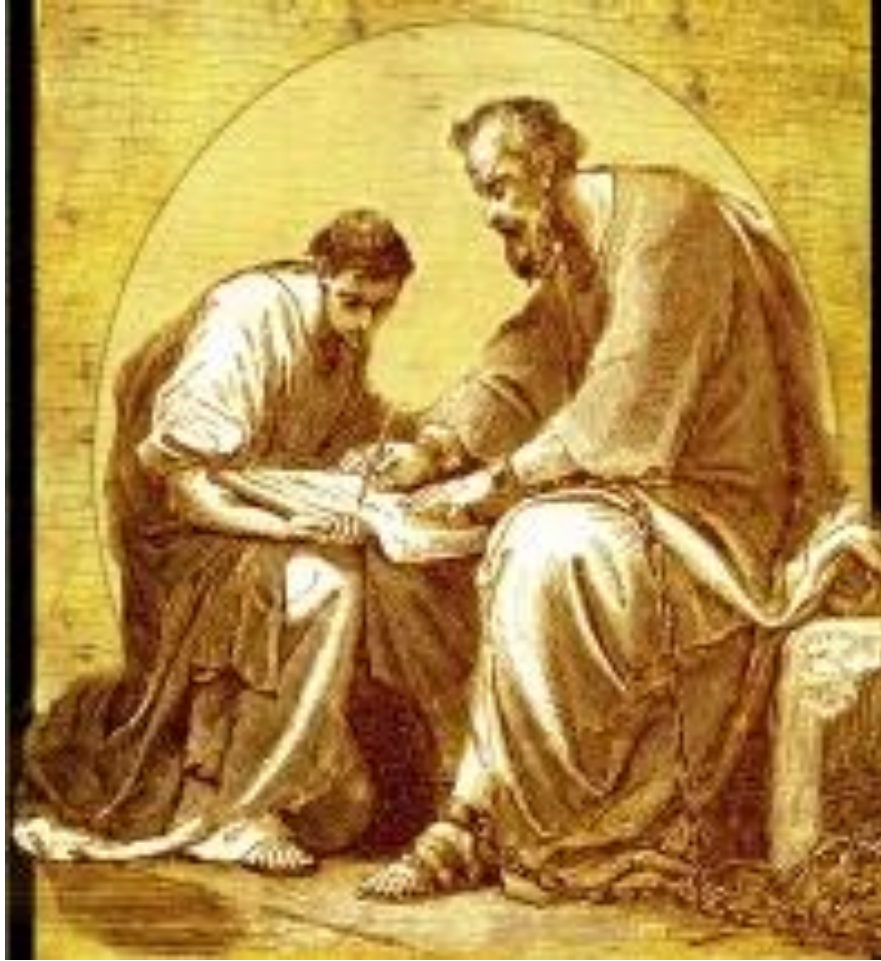
www.AtChristsTable.org



Table of Contents

Apostolic Discipleship	p 3
“Apostolic”	p 4
Christ-Centeredness	p 8
Apostolic Fellowship	p 9
Apostolic Teaching	p 11
Addendum: Notes from a Case Study	p 14





Apostolic Discipleship

In my essay, *“Discipleship and the Equipping Ministries”*¹, I discuss at length the particular ministry relationships between a disciple and an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd and teacher. Here, I would like to identify that which each of these Christ-appointed ministries have in common: **“Apostolicity”**.

“Apostolic”

“... He gave gifts to men.... And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ....”²

This passage tells us that Jesus gave certain gifts to men, and gave certain men as gifts to the Church. Something which is important for us to understand is this: In building His Church,³ **Jesus blesses men – not methods**. There may be some value in considering discipling methodologies; but in the end, **Jesus blesses disciples through men rather than through methods**.

¹ For a complimentary copy of this and other essays, email: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

² Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV). Whereas the NASB reads "as apostles", etc. and the NKJV reads "to be apostles", etc., neither "as" nor "to be" are in the Greek text.)

³ Matthew 16:18

Again, Jesus gave certain gifts to men, and gave certain men as gifts to the Church. The apostle Paul was able to say to the Thessalonians, “You know *what kind of men* we proved ourselves to be....”⁴ That which qualifies these men to equip the Church is not their fulfilling the presupposed “job descriptions” of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher, but rather **who they are as ambassadors of Christ**⁵. These are men who “*have been with Jesus*”⁶, and bring the presence of Jesus.

Now, in saying these things, I AM NOT SAYING that every minister who *claims* to be an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor or a teacher is inherently “apostolic”. I am far from even implying that. The point I endeavored to make in Part 1 of this essay is that most ministers attempting to “equip the saints” are, in fact, NOT “apostolic”. What I AM SAYING is this: Every minister **who has been truly given to the Church as a gift from the**

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:5 *The Amplified Bible*

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:20

⁶ Acts 4:13

ascended Christ will prove to have this “apostolic” quality which I am discussing.⁷

Just as there is an essential difference between the ministry of teaching and the ministry of discipling (i.e. “teaching them to observe all Christ commanded”), there is also an essential difference between ministry and “apostolic” ministry. And, there is also a difference between “Discipleship”, as conventionally understood, and “Apostolic Discipleship”.

Although there are various schools of thought on discipling, and different methodologies are promoted, I think it is true to say that discipleship is conventionally understood to be a ministry which focuses on the initial development of the basic components of the Christian life, such as Bible reading, prayer, local church

⁷ So that the reader doesn't miss the point of what I desire to communicate here: The debate concerning whether the ministry of the apostle still exists for the Church today or “passed away” in the first century, in this case, is quite beside the point. *Apostolic* (adjective) teaching, based on the apostles' (noun) teaching recorded in the Scriptures is an absolutely necessary and sorely lacking *genre and quality of teaching* having a particular approach and goal – viz. to lay the foundation of Christ and to build Christ experientially in the lives of individuals and churches. I am focusing here on the adjective, *apostolic*, rather than the noun, *apostle* – i.e. a genre and *quality* of faith and practice (Jude 3), rather than a *supposed* job description of an apostle. However, I am not a dispensationalist – I do believe that all the equipping ministries in the New Testament are for today. I deal with this issue in the afore-mentioned essay, “*Discipleship and the Equipping Ministries*”.

attendance, obedience, stewardship, witnessing, etc. “Apostolic Discipleship” certainly addresses these things, but while it is understood to be “**foundational**”, it is not looked on as being something “initial”, per se – it is perceived as something “*eternal*”.

Christ-Centeredness

Discipleship has to do with the Christian life. But, whereas conventional discipleship focuses on merely developing various practices of the Christian life, first and foremost, “Apostolic Discipleship” focuses on **knowing Christ, who IS our life**⁸.

“Apostolic Discipleship” has a very definite Christ-centered approach, focusing on Christ as the Center of Christianity, Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life for the disciple, as well as, Christ as the Foundation and Head of the Church.

“Apostolic Discipleship” is all about growing in Revelation of Christ, Relationship with Christ and Reflection of Christ. This essential characteristic – which I am referring to as “apostolic” - is either seen and grasped or it isn’t. It is either the core of the discipleship or it is essentially missing.

⁸ Colossians 3:4

Apostolic Fellowship

Acts 2:42 tells us that the disciples “were continually devoting themselves to **the apostles’ teaching and fellowship....**” In his commentary on this verse, John Gill, reminds us that the disciples were also **fellowshipping with the apostles**. The syntax in the Greek text has both the teaching *and* the fellowship referring back to “the apostles”. In fact, The Amplified Bible translates it as: **“the instruction and fellowship of the apostles”**.

What is the significance of the fact that the disciples “were continually devoting themselves to **the apostles’ fellowship**”? What was the nature of this “fellowship”? What was taking place during this “fellowship”? **Discipling**⁹.

A significant aspect of “Apostolic Discipleship” is that the relationship between the disciple and the one discipling is a **MINISTRY RELATIONSHIP**. These may also be friendships, but they are ministry relationships by nature. Something in addition to human friendship is taking place in these relationships. *The life of*

⁹ Alternative terms may be: “Mentoring” and/or “Spiritual Parenting”.

Christ is being ministered through the Spirit and the word of Christ. In John's gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."¹⁰ Human friendships are good, but an intentional ministry relationship is vital for discipleship. Since it takes the authority of Christ to make a disciple of Christ, **authentic ministry relationships share the life of Christ**, i.e. *they are Christ-centered relationships through which Christ is revealed and relationship with Christ is nurtured.*

¹⁰ John 6:63

Apostolic Teaching

Acts 2:42 tells us that the disciples “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching....”

“Apostolic Discipleship” has to do with “**apostolic teaching**”. In my booklet, “*Apostolic Teaching*”,¹¹ I discuss at length teaching which is “apostolic” in nature; but I will attempt to summarize here by saying: *Apostolic teaching is teaching with a particular approach, goal, genre and quality:*

The New Testament Scriptures explicitly tell us that **the foundation of Christ is laid** in the Church by *apostolic teaching*.¹² What does this mean? How does *apostolic teaching* **lay the foundation of Christ** in the Church?

The goal of *apostolic teaching* is the EXPERIENCE of Christ and the FORMATION of Christ in the disciple. Therefore, the subject matter of *apostolic teaching* is **Christ** – that is, teachings ABOUT Christ and the teachings OF Christ. Teachings ABOUT Christ are

¹¹ For a complimentary copy of this and other essays, email: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

¹² I Corinthians 3:10-11, Ephesians 2:20, 3:1-7

found in typology throughout the Old Testament¹³, which are wonderfully encapsulated in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews.¹⁴ And, of course, the teachings OF Christ are found throughout the gospels, many of which are found in the "Sermon on the Mount" and the "Parables of the Kingdom".¹⁵

Again, *apostolic teaching* is teaching with a particular approach, goal, genre and quality – its goal is the EXPERIENCE of Christ and the FORMATION of Christ in the disciple. It is obvious that the Church has a plethora of teaching ministries. Personally, I think it is just as obvious that it has a dearth of *apostolic teaching* ministries. The Church has a need to “continue steadfastly” and “be devoted to” *apostolic teaching*.¹⁶

¹³ E.G. The Old Testament tabernacle, feasts and priesthood. I am of the opinion that the interpretation of ALL Old Testament typology is for the SOLE purpose of revealing Christ. The ONLY purpose of any of my teachings interpreting or incorporating Old Testament typology is to reveal Christ.

¹⁴ E.G. My teaching series entitled "Seeing Christ in the Book of Hebrews", "Seeing Him Who Is Unseen", "Tabernacle Truths", as well as, "The Table and the Feast", "And His Name Will Be Called", "Foundation Stones", "The Foundation of the Church", "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

¹⁵ E.G. My teaching series entitled "The Character of the King & His Kingdom", as well as, "Abide in the Vine", "Who Is this King of Glory", "The Way of the Cross", and "Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross".

¹⁶ Acts 2:42

When the ascended Christ gives an equipping ministry gift, He also gives the necessary grace to fulfill that ministry. The *apostolic teaching* ministry is the special grace to teach the REVELATION of the mystery of Christ in such a way as to bring a people into fullness of RELATIONSHIP with Christ, with a view to REFLECTION of Christ – by the working of the Spirit.

“And we all, with unveiled face, *continually* seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (in the face of Jesus Christ – Cf. 4:6), are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.”¹⁷

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:18 (AMP)

Addendum

Notes from a Case Study¹⁸

In November of 2017, my wife and I, along with our daughter-in-law, traveled together by car approximately 3000 miles (to and fro) in response to two separate family crises. The somberness of the two situations and the extended time together in the car (approximately 7 days in total) afforded some significant conversations about life and the things of God. As these conversations took place, I was silently having a conversation with myself – “taking notes”, as it were, on how this discipling was taking place in our relationship with our daughter-in-law. Below are some notes I made to myself:

- Discipling is **cultivating** “those whom the Lord has given”. (A phrase which will be explained later in the essay)

¹⁸ Following are some general thoughts gleaned from a particular “case study” – namely, our discipling relationship with our daughter-in-law. Actually the content of this entire essay is drawn from a lifetime of experience with discipling relationships with - one biological son, an adopted daughter, two adopted grandchildren we raised from birth - a grand-daughter (and her husband) and a grandson (and his wife, i.e. our daughter-in-law), two grandsons, a great-grand-daughter and a great-grandson, as well as, many Christian couples, countless individual Christians, and most recently, a particular young Christian couple.

- From an elder’s perspective, the ministry of discipleship is actually a lifetime investment. Whereas, the perspective of a typical church ministry sees discipleship as a “program”, which is: short- term, should see a “return on investment”, and attempts to identify the particular “techniques” which have good and measurable outcomes.

- The ministry of a discipling relationship includes:
 - Time, talk & teaching
 - long-term friendship
 - long-term observation
 - imparting primarily through life example rather than merely dispensing information

- In a discipling relationship, **affirmation** and **encouragement** play a major role.

- Discipling is primarily about **nurturing** peoples’ lives rather than merely “equipping” people with spiritual commodities.

- Germane to discipleship is the concept of “Family”.¹⁹ “Family” can be re-defined to include both biological and non-biological relationships.
- Discipling is more like parenting than simply teaching.
- What has been learned by the one being disciplined is sometimes acknowledged as coming from the one doing the discipling, but sometimes not.
- Generally speaking, young people are busy building their lives and don't realize they need a ministry relationship with spiritual elders until they are young adults.
- Those young people who do seek out a ministry relationship with spiritual elders are somewhat rare and wise.

¹⁹ I would highly recommend an article by Chip Brogden entitled “*Family, Fellowship, and Leadership*”: <https://www.chipbrogden.com/family-fellowship-and-leadership/>

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Just a little bit about ourselves ...

We have been married for 37 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Being an avid student by nature, I have done formal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology.

We served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years helping to establish churches and train church leaders. Our Bible teaching ministry has also taken us to other countries like Zimbabwe, Brazil, and England, as well as, throughout the United States.

We have pastored several churches, and as an itinerant Bible teacher, I have ministered in hundreds of churches on four continents. As a writer, I've authored many publications which are distributed to church leaders worldwide.

We minister together speaking in churches, leading spiritual formation seminars, personal mentoring, and administrating an international partnership of church leaders, which includes occasional overseas missions.

ACT publications

“... combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

1 Corinthians 2:13

A teaching ministry from Bill and Frances Furioso

At Christ's Table

Disciples of the King and His Kingdom eating and drinking of Jesus

THE HEAD

THE CENTER

THE FOUNDATION

of Biblical Christianity
with a view to

REVELATION of Christ

RELATIONSHIP with Christ

REFLECTION of Christ

Digital Addresses:

> YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso

> Facebook: www.facebook.com/atchriststable

> Twitter: www.twitter.com/atchriststable1

> WordPress: atchriststable.wordpress.com

Correspondence: AtChristsTable@gmail.com