



The Making of a Disciple

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How does God make a disciple? Does a person who becomes a Christian also automatically become a disciple? When Jesus said, "Follow Me," was He inviting people to salvation or to something more? This second article in our series on the nature of discipleship will continue to explore the two different views of discipleship espoused today and how they relate to the issue of salvation.

I. Disciples: Born or Made?

The opening questions can be phrased simply: *Are disciples born or made?* In the first article of this series we concluded that a disciple is someone who is a learner or follower of a teacher or master. We learned that in relation to Jesus Christ, the term was used of those unsaved, those saved, and those saved who have made a serious commitment to Jesus as Lord and Master of their lives. What all three groups had in common that merited the designation *disciples* was that all were following Jesus Christ to some degree. Discipleship is therefore best understood as a journey, a direction, an orientation of one's life toward becoming like Christ. This can only be accomplished by following Christ.

The most common use of the term in the Gospels was in reference to those believers who followed Christ wholeheartedly, especially those who were later called *apostles*. This fullest sense of discipleship is the focus of this second article. Are such committed disciples born or made? Is the call to salvation the same as the call to discipleship? We will examine specific calls to discipleship in the Gospels to see if they are calls to salvation or something more, that is, if they are calls to a life-commitment beyond the issue of one's eternal destiny. The calls we will consider are those that relate to the life of the Apostle Peter, for reasons which will be explained later. First we will summarize the two basic views about the relationship between the call to discipleship and the call to salvation.

A. View 1: Disciples Are Born

This view claims the call to discipleship is the call to salvation. The calls are identical. The conditions of discipleship, hard as they may sound, are also the indispensable conditions of salvation. This teaching is basic to the Lordship Salvation position, which teaches that one cannot merely relate to Jesus as *Savior*, but one must also give total control of his or her life to Jesus as *Lord* and *Master* in order to be saved. The term *disciple* therefore emphasizes the obedience and "costliness" of salvation in contrast to the "cheap grace" purportedly found in "easy believism," which is the name given the opposing view (called here the *Free Grace* view).

Likewise, the term *follow* denotes a commitment to faithfulness and obedience by which true believers can be identified.

This view is set forth by a number of Bible teachers and theologians. John MacArthur states, "The gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience."¹ He adds,

Every Christian is a disciple. . . . Disciples are people who believe, whose faith motivates them to obey all Jesus commanded.²

James G. Merritt likewise asserts,

The fact is, Jesus sought more than a superficial following; he sought disciples. In short, the evangelistic call of Jesus was essentially a call to repentance and radical discipleship.³

James Montgomery Boice also argues that

...discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. >From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.⁴

To support their views these proponents of commitment-salvation appeal to the early calls of Jesus to the first disciples, as we shall see.

Neglecting the demands of discipleship is considered by these and other Lordship teachers to be an error of the contemporary church. Modern evangelism (they claim) should include a call to follow (=submit and obey) in the proclamation of the Gospel.⁵

B. View 2: Disciples Are Made

The opposing view, here called the *Free Grace* view for the sake of simplicity, holds that discipleship is a separate issue from salvation. This does not mean that committed discipleship *cannot* be a continuum originating with one's initial faith in Christ for salvation from sin. Obviously, discipleship *should* be the logical choice of those who truly understand the issues of salvation, and often it is. However, the call to salvation is distinct from the call to follow Christ in discipleship.

The Grace Evangelical Society states this position in its purpose statement: "To promote the clear proclamation of God's free salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, *which is properly correlated with and distinguished from issues related to discipleship* (emphasis added)."⁶ Authors such as Zane C. Hodges, Charles C. Ryrie, Robert N. Wilkin, and Roy B. Zuck are also careful to separate the call to salvation from the call to discipleship.⁷

In the remainder of this article, our examination of Christ's calls to discipleship will show that the "Disciples-Are-Made" view is more biblically informed. We will accomplish this by observing how Peter was made a disciple.

II. Peter as a Model Disciple

When we examine the calls of Christ to discipleship in the Gospels, we find ourselves constantly crossing paths with one character in particular, the Apostle Peter. Though the calls to salvation and discipleship can be separated without focusing on the person of Peter, attention to this prominent disciple is helpful in forming a cohesive picture of the progression of discipleship. But a focus on Peter is motivated by more than pragmatic convenience; there is also a theological basis. Peter is presented by the Gospels as the model disciple with whom readers can identify as disciples themselves.

This point can be argued from all the Gospels in their general presentation of Peter. Simon Peter was the prominent disciple. Not only is he always listed first (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16), but as the spokesman for the disciples as a group, he represents the consensus of the group's opinion of Jesus and His teaching (e.g., Matt 16:15-16; 17:24; Mark 8:29; 16:7; Luke 9:20; 12:41; John 6:67-69). Peter is also given the privilege of being one of the three in Jesus' inner circle along with James and John (e.g., Matt 17:1; 26:37; Mark 9:2; 14:33; Luke 9:28).

We see Peter's role as the representative disciple most clearly in Matthew and Mark's presentation of him. In these Gospels Peter serves as the vehicle for Matthew and Mark's message and the point of identification with the readers in their discipleship. Michael J. Wilkins notes Peter's prominence in Matthew:

Even as the disciples function in Matthew's gospel as an example, both positively and negatively, of what it means to be a disciple, so also the portrait of Simon Peter in Matthew's gospel provides a personalized example of discipleship for Matthew's church... Peter functions exemplarily in much the same way as does the group of disciples. While Matthew concentrates on the disciples as an exemplary group, Peter is seen as a "typical" individual... The church would find much in common with Peter's typically human characteristics. He is much like any ordinary believer with his highs and lows, and he, therefore, becomes an example from whom the church can learn.⁸

A similar case can be made for the presentation of Peter in Mark as noted by Paul J. Achtemeier:

One must keep in mind that Peter may have representative value for Mark, so that he is not to be considered only as an individual. For instance, Mark may think of Peter as a representative of the disciple or of discipleship, both in his generosity and in his failings. As a disciple he is called to be a fisher of men, and he and his brother set an example in immediately leaving their nets and following Jesus (1:16-18), so that he can speak for the group when he says, "We have left everything and followed you" (10:28). Yet in his falling away at the time of the passion, he is also typical of the group (14:29-31). Moreover, if Peter is a typical disciple, since the disciples of Jesus are meant to serve as lessons for the readers of the Gospel, Peter may also be the lesson par *excellence* for Christians as to the demands of discipleship upon them.⁹

Peter's experiences encompass those of a typical believer. His life is presented from the time of initial faith and recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:40-42), through stages of

development, to a fuller understanding of what Jesus' ministry encompassed. In the process, he precipitates Jesus' instruction on what it really means to be a committed disciple. Positively, Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (Mark 8:27-29) is central to his role as a disciple. But on the negative side, so is his failure to comprehend Jesus' ministry in suffering and death (Mark 8:31-33). Peter's experiences of following Christ take all believers through their own failures and successes.

Peter's name change from *Simon* also has a representative function in the Gospels. Jesus' new name for him, *Cephas* in Aramaic or *Petros* in Greek, means "rock." In spite of his failures, Peter the Rock would represent discipleship. Carsten P. Thiede writes:

The early Christians, and this includes the apostles and their pupils, could therefore look to Peter and his experience as a kind of model—Peter was *the petros*, the rock, not because of his strengths, but in spite of his weaknesses, "deputizing" for the weaknesses of them all.¹⁰

For these reasons, when we view the life of Peter, we see the life of a typical disciple as designed by God. This informs us about the nature of discipleship, when it begins, how it develops, and the end toward which it is directed. In short, when we study Peter's life we see the making of a disciple.

III. Peter as a Progressing Disciple

When we study the life and progress of Peter in the Gospels, we find definite stages in his commitment of discipleship based on his responses to Jesus' calls to "follow" Him. As noted in the first article in this series, Jesus' call to "Follow Me" was a call to follow Him in a life of discipleship. The various calls to follow serve as a helpful framework in understanding the progression of discipleship or how a disciple is made.

A. Following in Salvation

Peter's first encounter with Christ is described in John 1:40-42. The setting for this meeting is Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28).¹¹ Andrew, Peter's brother, first meets Jesus, then goes to find Peter. When Simon Peter meets Jesus, we have no record of his words or thoughts, only that Jesus changed his name from Simon to *Cephas* (=Peter, John 1:42). Whether Peter was saved here we do not know. But Jesus knew he would be saved and useful to Him. However, Andrew's faith¹² implies Peter's. We know that Peter is at least saved by the time of the wedding in Cana, for there we have the scriptural confirmation that "[Christ's] disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

In neither John 1 nor 2 is there any call for Peter to follow Christ as a disciple. Neither do we find conditions of commitment required by Christ nor any commitment expressed by Peter. A. B. Bruce notes the significance of Jesus' meeting in John 1 with those who would later become His disciples:

We have here to do not with any formal solemn call to the great office of the apostleship, or even with the commencement of an uninterrupted discipleship, but at the utmost with the beginnings of an acquaintance with and of faith in Jesus on the part of certain individuals who subsequently became constant attendants on His person, and ultimately apostles of His religion. Accordingly we find no mention made in the three first Gospels of the events here recorded.¹³

The encounter with Peter in John 1 clearly happened in the early phase of Jesus' ministry. Timing is important in understanding the significance of Jesus' later calls to follow. The story shows that God's first call to unbelievers is a call to salvation.

B. Following in Commitment

The first call to Peter to follow in discipleship is issued in Matt 4:18-22 and Mark 1:14-20, in *Galilee* (Matt 4:12, 18,23; Mark 1:14, 16,21). Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to become "fishers of men." Is this episode also a call to salvation? Some of the Lordship Salvation school believe it is.

Commenting on this call, Boice assumes this interpretation to support his argument for commitment-salvation:

...discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. >From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.¹⁴

There is no dispute that in these passages Jesus is calling Peter and the others to a further commitment of discipleship. The command "Follow Me" and the promise that they will become "fishers of men" correctly denote the obedience and submission essential to discipleship. However, there is no support for Boice's assumption that this encounter is either chronologically or theologically parallel with the first encounter of Jesus with Peter and the other disciples in John 1.¹⁵

Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:14-20 could not possibly be the same event described in John 1:35-42, which is clearly Jesus' first encounter with Peter and the other disciples. In John 1 the setting is Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 1:28), not Galilee, as in Matthew and Mark (cf. John 1:43).¹⁶ In John there is no mention of a seaside setting nor of fishing for men. Furthermore, Peter is brought to Jesus (1:41-42) rather than being already present as Jesus walked by (Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16). Finally, in the first chapter of John, Peter is obviously introduced to Jesus for the first time, while Matthew and Mark's accounts report no introduction of the men to Jesus, and appear to assume a degree of familiarity with Jesus.

Many commentators agree that Matthew and Mark's accounts of Jesus' call to follow and become fishers of men *presuppose* the facts of the John 1 encounter.¹⁷ Since Peter was saved in John 1 or at latest by John 2 (see v11), then the call to follow in Matthew and Mark cannot be a call to salvation. James Donaldson writes on the call to become fishers of men:

The response of the disciples is not an act of faith in Jesus, but more significantly an act of obedience. Mark's Gospel issues no call to repentance here but only a call to discipleship.¹⁸

Hans Conzelmann makes the same distinction between salvation and discipleship in this narrative: "Jesus does not make this discipleship in the external sense a general condition for salvation."¹⁹ Even A. W. Pink, a strong Lordship Salvation teacher, agrees: "John tells us of the *conversion* of these disciples, whereas Mark (as also Matthew and Luke) deals with their *call to service*..." (emphasis his).²⁰ After salvation, Jesus calls those who have believed to a life of evangelism.

C. Following in Obedience

Another time we find Peter following Christ is in the seaside account described in Luke 5:1-11. After an unfruitful night of fishing, Jesus finds Peter washing his nets. He tells him to launch the boat and let down the nets. Peter objects, but obeys, and catches a huge haul of fish. The results produce in Peter a broken spirit as he now learns to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus tells Peter, "From now on you will catch men" (5:10), and the text notes that Peter and his companions "forsook all and followed Him" (5:11).

The story has many similarities to the seaside call in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, and not surprisingly, some have interpreted it as a parallel account. Such an interpretation adds fuel to the Lordship Salvation fire, for now they have Christ calling Peter to salvation in such a way that it includes Christ's lordship over him (v 8) and the forsaking of everything. For example, Merritt writes, "the evangelistic call of Jesus was essentially a call to repentance and radical discipleship." He adds, "the call of Christ to discipleship is a multi-faceted call which demands a singular commitment of faith and obedience." Merritt next argues from Luke 5:1-11 that part of obedience is the evangelistic task. He then states the inevitable conclusion from his interpretation of Luke 5:1-11:

To be a disciple one must follow Jesus. But to follow Jesus, one will become a fisher of men. Therefore, "if you are not fishing, you are not following!" The call to discipleship is indeed a call to evangelism.²¹

Merritt's equation of this episode with Matthew 4 and Mark 1 and his interpretation of them as a call to salvation virtually forces him to *include evangelism as a condition of salvation*. One might wonder, since Christ's *lordship* is in view, why stop at evangelism?

Merritt's conclusion comes from confusing the calls of Christ. However, just as John 1 was shown to be different from Matthew 4 and Mark 1, so also Luke 5 can be shown to be different from Matthew 4 and Mark 1. Admittedly, there are some similarities, such as the seaside setting in Galilee, the context of fishing, and the immediate response of the fishermen who follow Jesus. However, there are many differences. For example, in Luke there is a multitude pressing Jesus as He stands on the shore, while in Matthew and Mark He is apparently alone and walking. Also, in Luke the fishermen are *out* of their boats *washing* their nets, but in Matthew and Mark they are *in* their boats *casting* their nets. In Luke Jesus gets into one of the boats for a fishing excursion,

but in Matthew and Mark it is obvious He does none of this. Plummer recognizes some similarities, but separates Luke's account from Matthew and Mark's:

Against these similarities however, we have to set the differences, chief among which is the miraculous draught of fishes which Mt. and Mk. omit. Could Peter have failed to include this in his narrative? And would Mk. have omitted it, if the Petrine tradition had contained it? It is easier to believe that some of the disciples were called more than once, and that their abandonment of their original mode of life was gradual: so that Mk. and Mt. may relate one occasion and Lk. another. Even after the Resurrection Peter speaks quite naturally of "going a fishing" (Jn. xxi. 3), as if it was still at least an occasional pursuit.²²

Plummer's observation fits the model of discipleship proposed in this article. In a progression of commitment, a disciple requires continual challenges or calls to become more of a disciple. This progression is seen in some of the details of Luke's account. For example, Jesus does not actually call Peter to follow here, yet Peter follows. Evidently Peter already knew the Lord's will, for earlier Jesus did actually call him to follow (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:14-20). For Peter, the question was one of *total* submission to that call. Indeed, Luke notes that in this instance he "forsook all," while Matthew and Mark both note that he only left the boat and his father. Jesus' words also seem to mark a progression, for while in Matthew the promise is "I *will* make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19) and in Mark "I *will* make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), in Luke Jesus moves from the future promise to the initiation of a present fulfillment when He says, "From *now on* you will catch men" (Luke 5:10). Jesus could say this now that Peter had learned the lesson of submission and obedience. "It was one thing to call the four apostles, it was quite another thing to demonstrate to them the power of the gospel they were to handle as fishers of men."²³

The significance of this episode in the progression of Peter's discipleship is noted by Richard D. Calenberg:

This event seems to mark an important step in the process and progress of commitment to Christ in discipleship on the part of Peter, James and John. Never again will they return to fishing until after the Passion. Peter, in particular, will faithfully follow Christ through every experience and his presence is repeatedly noted by the Gospel writers. Not until the events immediately preceding the crucifixion will his commitment to discipleship falter.²⁴

It should be no surprise that Peter had returned to his fishing in Luke 5, for as Calenberg and Plummer both noted, we see he does this again in John 21. A number of other commentators have noted this obvious progression in discipleship in the Gospels.²⁵

As we examine the calls of Christ to discipleship in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, and later in Luke 5, we find no mention of the Gospel, no call to believe unto salvation. The calls were, after all, to become fishers *of men* as they followed Christ in obedience. Peter initially followed with some enthusiasm (Matthew 4; Mark 1), but not with the submission and obedience he finally manifests in Luke 5:1-11. Jesus calls those who are his disciples to submissive obedience.

D. Following in Sacrifice

Now that Peter has learned his first lesson in submission and obedience, Jesus advances him in the school of discipleship with a lesson on what it really means to be a disciple. On the occasion of Peter's climactic confession (Matt 16:13f.; Mark 8:27f.; Luke 9:18f.), Jesus instructs all the disciples in the conditions or cost of continuing in discipleship. Though all the disciples are addressed, Peter becomes the principal character in precipitating this instruction.

The interesting juxtaposition of Jesus addressing Peter as "Blessed" (Matt 16:17) and then as "Satan" (Matt 16:23) shows that, though Peter was saved, he was limited in his understanding of suffering in relation to discipleship. He is praised for his proper understanding of who Jesus is, but rebuked for his lack of understanding about what Jesus must do in following the Father's will. Peter's incomplete comprehension of Christ's submission to God's will indicates a parallel deficient comprehension about what it means to be a disciple submitted to God's will in the fullest sense. This prepares the way for Christ's well-known instructions about the cost of discipleship.

The many conditions listed in Matt 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; and Luke 9:23-27 (cf. also Luke 14:25-33) are considered conditions for salvation by Lordship Salvation teachers²⁶ In the next article of this series, we will show how each of the specific conditions cannot refer to salvation. Here we make only some general observations in relation to Peter. First, the conditions are spoken to him as *a believer*. As shown, his faith is affirmed by the Scripture (John 2:11), and he has received the approbation of Jesus for his confession of faith (Matt 16:17-19). Peter has been following Jesus since the two seaside calls and is included in the "disciples" whom Jesus addresses (Matt 16:21, 24; Mark 8:33-34). What sense does it make to have Jesus telling Peter and the disciples—men who were *already* believers—how to be saved?

Second, the language Jesus uses to speak of the ultimate goal of the conditions is language not used of salvation. We have already seen that in the progression of Peter's relationship to Christ, the call to "follow" is a call to discipleship, not salvation.²⁷ In giving the conditions of discipleship, Jesus again uses the term "Follow Me" (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Jesus also says that anyone who does not meet His conditions "cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26-33). Clearly the issue is *discipleship and following, not faith and salvation*. Another important term used in these passages is "come *after* Me" (*erchomai plus opiso*) found in all three Synoptic Gospels for those who would meet the conditions of discipleship (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27). This term is significant because it is seen here as essentially equivalent to "follow" and the idea of discipleship. Perhaps more significant is that it is *different* from the language Jesus uses to invite people *to* salvation, which is "come *to* Me" (*erchomai plus pros*).²⁸

Jesus was not telling Peter how to be saved, but what it means to be a disciple in the fullest sense. Peter was already a disciple, but every disciple is challenged to a fuller commitment in his walk with the Lord. If the challenge is rejected, the believer has, in effect, ceased following. For Peter, who does not fully comprehend Jesus' obedience to the Father, it is time to challenge his incomplete comprehension of discipleship with specific conditions. Obedient disciples can expect Jesus to challenge them with a call to the deepest sacrificial commitment.

E. Following in Failure

The next stage of Peter's discipleship finds him faltering in following the Lord. In the upper room on the night of the final Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus told Peter, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward" (John 13:36). Peter, who still trusted in his own strength to enable him to follow Christ, objected to the pronouncement (13:35). Jesus, of course, was predicting Peter's infamous three-fold denial during His arrest (13:38). The "now... afterward" contrast shows this to be a temporary interruption due to impending and difficult circumstances.

The fulfillment of our Lord's prediction is in John 18:15-27. In this account, there is positive identification of Peter as still a disciple. The one accompanying Peter to the courtyard of the High Priest, usually assumed to be the disciple John,²⁹ is called "another disciple" (18:15) or "the other disciple" (18:16),³⁰ thus identifying Peter as a disciple to the reader. Not only that, but it is said that Peter "followed Jesus" (18:15). What we have, then, is a picture of a disciple under great pressure in his progress of following the Lord.

The denial itself also makes Peter's discipleship the issue. The servant girl asks him, "You are not also one of this Man's *disciples*, are you?" Peter denied he was a disciple (18:17). Meanwhile, the reader is told that the high priest was asking Jesus "about His *disciples*" (18:19). Then Peter is asked again by the servants and officers, "You are not also one of His *disciples*, are you?" Peter denied it again (18:25). While Peter is denying the fact that he is a disciple of Jesus, the reader is shown that, to a certain degree, Peter really is following. After all, he did follow Christ thus far, in contrast to most of the other disciples. It is in this context that he failed Christ and came face to face with his own weakness.

Are we to take this interruption in Peter's following as an interruption in his salvation? There is no biblical support for such a view. The most reasonable interpretation posits a progression in Peter's following. Though Peter ceases to follow for a short time, he does not really cease to be a disciple. Jesus' promise to Peter remains: "You shall follow Me afterward" (13:36). It was not his discipleship that failed, but his *courage*. The disciple who is progressing may falter during tests of his faith. Jesus allows His followers to fail in order to show them their weaknesses and so that "afterward" they will trust in *His* power instead of their own.

F. Following in Service

The last stage in the progression of Peter's discipleship occurs after the resurrection when Jesus appears to Peter and six other "disciples" in Galilee (John 21:1-2). Peter had returned to his familiar activity of fishing. It is certainly no coincidence that Peter's activity of fishing forms the backdrop for a further challenge to discipleship. In contrast to Luke 5, however, Peter does not object to the Lord's command to let down the net on the right side of the boat (21:6), demonstrating that he has learned the lesson of obedience.

Jesus' calls to "Follow Me" (21:19,22) come both after the three-fold commissioning of Peter to a shepherding ministry and after a description of how Peter would die (21:18). The dialogue shows that Peter is now restored in his relationship with the Lord. Now that Peter is resigned to God's

will to the fullest degree and has forsaken self-reliance, Jesus is free to tell Peter how he will die. There is no confident denial of the revelation here as earlier when Christ spoke of His own death. Peter now understands that discipleship means laying down one's life. When Jesus concludes the revelation and says to Peter, "Follow Me," He is calling him to minister and to die in his service to others. Compared to Christ's earlier calls to follow, Westcott notes,

Now to "follow Christ" required further the perception of His course; the spiritual discernment by which His movements can still be discovered; and yet further the readiness to accept martyrdom as the end.³¹

Surely to Peter the words had more significance than ever. At each stage in the life of a disciple the call to follow has progressively deeper significance.

Jesus called Peter to follow a second time in this interchange (21:22). This second time emphasizes the single-minded devotion necessary to follow Christ in ministry. Peter had expressed concern about the future of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (almost certainly John). Jesus told Peter that John's future should not concern him, but told him, "You follow Me." The rebuke and the emphatic pronoun "You" (*sy*) indicates that Jesus wants each disciple to follow in his own way. That is, the Lord's specific will for each disciple must be followed regardless of what others do.

It should now be obvious that the call to follow *cannot* be the same as a call to salvation. Such a thought is totally foreign to this last segment of the Gospels' record of Peter's life. What we have observed is that Peter was called to follow throughout his life and that all the calls were after he had believed. In John 21 he is called to serve Christ and to follow Christ's specific will for his life even at the certain cost of that life. Jesus calls each of His disciples to follow in a specific and unique ministry.

IV. Conclusion

Disciples are made, not born. We have seen this in the life of Peter. Furthermore, the recurrent calls of Christ to Peter to follow in his life show that there is a sense in which a disciple can always become *more of a disciple*. The call to follow persists throughout the life of a disciple. In Peter's life we see a funnel effect. The progressive calls to follow begin with a general direction and commitment, but become more and more specific in what that commitment entails. Each time the disciple is called to follow, new significance is attached. With each call, the disciple is challenged to a deeper commitment and a greater sacrifice.

This supports our understanding of discipleship as a direction or orientation, not a state. It is a committed and progressive following of Jesus Christ as Master. Anywhere on one's journey toward becoming like Christ one can be called a disciple, even in the midst of a temporary failure. It seems reasonable to state that anyone who rejects the challenge to commit himself to Christ ceases to follow and removes himself from the path of discipleship.

To confuse the call to discipleship with the call to salvation is a simplistic and confusing approach to the Scriptures and real-life experience. It is disturbing to take the conclusions of the

Lordship position to their inevitable end. If the deeper relationship of discipleship is not distinguished from salvation, then many or most professing evangelicals—including *Lordship Salvationists*—are lost. Hull shows the incongruity of such a view with reality when he speaks of true disciples:

If disciples are born not made, while these characteristics would take time to develop, they would develop 100 percent of the time in the truly regenerate. Therefore, every single Christian would be a healthy, reproducing believer. If people did not reflect the disciple's profile, then they would not be Christians.

If disciples are born and not made, non-Christians dominate the evangelical church. A generous estimate would find no more than 25 percent of evangelicals meeting Christ's standard for a disciple. As stated earlier, only 7 percent have been trained in evangelism, and only 2 percent have introduced another to Christ. By Christ's definition, disciples reproduce themselves through evangelism. If one takes the "disciples are born and not made" theology and joins it to the definition of a disciple given by Jesus and then adds the objective facts concerning today's evangelical church, the results are alarming. At least 75 percent of evangelicals are not Christians, because they just don't measure up to Christ's standards of what it means to be a disciple.³²

Lordship Salvation teaching has imposed a standard for salvation that most professing Christians cannot meet. This *by itself* does not make it wrong. But it does make it dubious in the extreme.

The issues of salvation and discipleship must remain distinct if one is to appreciate the wonders of each. The call to salvation through faith alone with no other conditions beautifies the doctrine of grace. The call to discipleship with its hard conditions makes the Christian life more meaningful and purposeful. Not surprisingly then, Lordship Salvation theology is detrimental to the Church. As Hull writes,

The "disciples are born and not made" theology has many harmful effects. Some quarters accept it because they have not stood that theology toe to toe with Jesus' definitions. When it does stand toe to toe, it creates a gospel of works. It adds to the requirements for salvation. Not only does it require faith in Christ, but commitment to the disciple's profile is required. Unless you are willing to commit to world evangelism, labor in the harvest field, placing Christ before everything in your life, then in the words of Jesus, "You cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:25-35); therefore you are denied salvation.³³

Disciples are made, not born. When we understand this, our Gospel remains truly *of grace*. Then as those saved by grace, we are motivated to cooperate with God and commit and submit ourselves to His purpose of conforming us to His Son, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Footnotes:

1 John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 21. See also 29-31, 196-98.

2 Ibid., 196.

3 James G. Merritt, "Evangelism and the Call of Christ," in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues*, ed. Thomas S. Ranier (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), 145.

4 James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 16.

5 E.g., Richard P. Belcher, *A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Salvation Controversy* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1990), 94-95; Boice, *Discipleship*, 13-16; MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 15-17; John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1958), 108.

6 The purpose statement can be found in past issues of the newsletter, *The Grace Evangelical Society News*.

7 Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989), 67-76; *The Gospel Under Siege*, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged (Redención Viva, 1992), 39-50; Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 103-14; Robert N. Wilkin, "'Soul Salvation,' Part 3: Saving Your Soul by Doing Good—James 1:21," *The Grace Evangelical Society News* 7 (February 1992), 2, and "Part 4: Gaining by Losing—Matthew 16:24-28" (March-April 1992), 2; Roy B. Zuck, "Cheap Grace?" *Kindred Spirit* 13 (Summer 1989), 7.

8 Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 185. See also his study, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Mathetes*, *Novum Testamentum Supplement* 59 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988); and Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr. A Historical and Theological Essay*, trans. Floyd Filson, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 25-33; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 332,334; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 72, 80.

9 Paul J. Achtemeier, "Peter in the Gospel of Mark" in *Peter in the New Testament*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1974), 62. See also W. S. Vorster, "Characterization of Peter in the Gospel of Mark" *Neotestamentica* 21(1987): 74.

10 Carsten P. Thiede, *Simon Peter: >From Galilee to Rome* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988; first published in 1986 by The Paternoster Press), 36. See also Gundry, *Matthew*, 334.

11 Suggestions for the location of this "Bethany" (MjT and NU text reading; "Bethabara" in the TR is least preferred) vary from the Bethany near Jerusalem to the region of Batanea in the Transjordan and to the north. For the purpose of our study, we only note that the setting of this encounter is *not* in Galilee. For more discussion, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1991), 146-47; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 142.

12 The account of John 1 leads us to believe that Andrew believed in Christ: (1) He followed John the Baptist (John 1:35) and evidently believed John's witness about Christ (1:36-37); (2) He followed Christ (1:37, 39-40); (3) He believed Jesus was the Messiah (1:41; cf. 20:30-31); (4) In the following story, Philip and Nathaniel obviously believe (1:45, 49-50); (5) Andrew's faith is confirmed in John 2:11.

13 Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), 1.

14 Boice, *Discipleship*, 16.

15 Ibid., 16-17.

16 See footnote 11 for a discussion on the location of this Bethany.

17 See William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 245-46; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis:

Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 169-70; Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (London: Robert Scott, Paternoster Row, 1909), 48; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, trans. Ray Togtman, *The Bible Student's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 77; Frederick Louis Godet, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 1:330.

18 James Donaldson, "'Called to Follow': A Twofold Experience of Discipleship in Mark," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 5 (February 1975), 69.

19 Hans Conzelmann, *Jesus*, trans. J. Raymond Lord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 35; in agreement, see Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 77.

20 A. W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 4 vols. (Ohio: Cleveland Bible Truth Depot, 1929), 1:62-63. Jesus' call to Philip to "Follow Me" (John 1:43) may seem incongruous with the argument thus far, as Jesus' encounter with Philip in John 1:43-45 appears to be His first. However, there is much evidence in the passage that Jesus was calling him to discipleship, not to salvation. Hendriksen notes: "We may probably assume that Andrew and Peter had told their friend and townsman about Jesus" (William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953], 1:108). See also John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospels: John* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), 45; and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 161. Indeed, John makes a special note that Philip was from the same city as Peter and Andrew (1:44). Also, while 1:43 says Jesus found Philip, in 1:45 Philip says he found the Messiah, indicating a previous knowledge, expectation, and even faith. It may also be possible that in 1:43 Jesus simply meant accompany Me on this journey" (so Godet, *John*, 1:331) in much the same sense as He told the first two disciples, "Come and see" (1:39).

21 Merritt, "Call of Christ," *Evangelism*, 145-46.

22 Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 147. In agreement, see Lenski, *Matthew*, 168-72, and *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 276-77; William F. Arndt, *Luke*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 155-56; Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, revised ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 124; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 181; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 279-80.

23 Lenski, *Luke*, 277.

24 Richard D. Calenberg, "The New Testament Doctrine of Discipleship" (Th. D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 121.

25 See Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 245-47; Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 181; Arndt, *Luke*, 156. For other excellent presentations of this idea, see Bruce, *Training*, 11-12, and Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 48-49.

26 E.g., Boice, *Discipleship*, 35-44, 117; Kenneth L. Gentry, "The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy," *Baptist Reformation Review* 5 (Spring 1976), 73-75; John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 253; MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 196-202; J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 72-73; John R. W. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord to Be Savior?—Yes," *Eternity* 10 (September 1959), 18.

27 See also the study of this term in my first article, "Coming to Terms with Discipleship," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 5 (Spring 1992), 39-41.

28 Cf. John 5:40;6:35, 37,44-45,65; 7:37.

29 See the discussions in Carson, *John*, 472-73, and Morris, *John*, 752-53.

30 The Majority Text and the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies Text support the reading "the other" (*ho allos*) in V 15 as well as v 16, but with no consequence to our point.

31 B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 304.

32 Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 55.

33 Ibid.