



“But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” John 12:24

DISCIPLESHIP

The Miracle of Multiplication

CLARENCE SEXTON

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Dedication

*T*his book is dedicated to my wife, Mary Evelyn Rogers Sexton. For the last half century, I have witnessed that she is a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.



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Introduction

God's call to every believer is to be a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (II Timothy 2:2).

The open secret in the work of God is discipleship. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only our Saviour, but He is also our teacher. He taught us in word and deed as He trained His disciples to follow His purpose and to have His passion. You can be His disciple.

Clarence A. Sutton
Acts 5:42

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*“So then neither is he that planteth
any thing, neither he that watereth;
but God that giveth the increase.”*

I Corinthians 3:7

MULTIPLICATION BEGINS WITH GOD

John 12:20-33



“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth.”

Luke 11:2



In the Christian life, we come to the understanding that God is always previous. In His work, there are no magic formulas or guaranteed equations. Unless He touches His work, there will be no life, no reproduction, and no multiplication.

In John chapter twelve, the Lord Jesus is on His way to the cross to bleed and die for our sins. A mighty miracle has been performed in Bethany only a short distance from Jerusalem. In that mighty miracle, Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, was raised from the dead and restored to life.

John 12:20-33 says,

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.

If Any Man Serve Me

Take special notice of the expression in verse twenty-six, “*If any man serve me.*” In the midst of so much talk about serving Christ, there seems to be so few who are truly serving the Lord. Some have created an imaginary agenda for God’s work that does not come from the Bible.

The responsibility of the servant is to obey his master. Our aim is obedience. Consider what God’s Word says concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His obedience. The Bible says in Philippians 2:5-8,

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Look at the word *servant* in verse seven, and the word *obedient* in verse eight. You may want to circle those words and connect the two. What is the responsibility of the servant? The answer is very simple. The servant has one responsibility—to obey the master.

The Lord Jesus became a servant and obeyed. He went to the cross. The servant’s responsibility is not to serve, but to obey the master. If the master says, “Sit still and do nothing; wait,” that is a part of his service. If the servant works long hours and has a demanding schedule at the bidding of the master, that is what he is to do. But our work is not to find something to do; it is to learn to listen to God and be obedient to Him.

Not one of us wants to serve anyone on earth except self in our natural state. Do you know that serving self is serving a tyrant? We must be rescued from self-serving. Only God can break this bondage.

As we consider this story in John 12, we see that the Jews have gathered at Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Two Greeks came to one of our Lord’s disciples and said, “*Sir, we would see Jesus.*” Philip found Andrew, and Andrew and Philip came to Christ.

The Lord Jesus answered in John 12:23 and said, *“The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.”* Then He declared, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”* Here we learn what it means to serve our Saviour.

REQUIREMENT

There is only one requirement the Lord makes for our service to Him, and it is death to self. Our Lord takes something from nature, a seed, and says, *“...But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”* We know that there is a great harvest from one seed when that seed is planted, and the germination process takes place and the fruit bearing begins.

One Requirement Met

From one seed comes a plant with many seeds, and from those seeds come many other plants with many more seeds. It is a work of multiplication, but it cannot take place until first there is death.

There is no telling what God could do with one life if this one requirement is met. We must die to self. Galatians 2:20 says, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

When Jesus Christ went to Calvary, He bled and died for our sins. He bore our sin debt on the cross. He tasted death for every man. A holy God said that we are all sinners. All of us have been found guilty, and the payment of our sin is death and hell. The good news is that Christ paid the debt for us with His own blood.

Because the debt has been paid in full by the blood of Christ, and we have trusted Christ as our Saviour, our record of sinfulness was borne in His body on the cross. His record of righteousness has been imputed to our account. We are going into heaven on His record.

On a daily basis, we must reckon self to be dead, dying daily and being delivered from the tyranny of the self-life. At every turn in life this conflict takes place. Will it be my way or God's way? My will or God's will? Shall I serve self or serve God?

We do not die easily. Every fabric of our self-life resists this death. One of the first texts I preached from was Luke 9:23-24. The Bible says,

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Christ's one requirement for serving Him is death to self. If we do not die to self, we are going to serve self and not the Lord.

REWARD

Again we read in John 12:26, *“If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”*

Note the word, *honour*. The Lord Jesus said, *“If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”* This is our reward; to have God's honor.

The Lord Jesus said in John 5:40-44,

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

This verse tells us that men are seeking glory for themselves, and that glory belongs only to the Lord. This seeking of glory for ourselves is the self-life.

What kind of fellowship and communion do you have with Christ? Do you want Him to be honored? Our Lord says very simply, *"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."*

How does God honor us? We find an open secret in the Old Testament concerning the glory of God and honor. In Exodus 33, Moses desired to see God's glory.

We read in Exodus 33:17-19,

And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Take special note of the word *glory* in verse eighteen, and the word *goodness* in verse nineteen. Never forget the connection here. Moses said, "I want to see Your glory," and God said, "All right, I will pass My goodness by you."

How do you recognize God's honor? Is it always in health or strength? If so, why was Paul sickly? He was physically weak, feeble, and had *"a thorn in the flesh,"* but God was good to him. What is this honor? It is the goodness of God in our lives.

Do you think it is meaningful when God gives rest to your soul? Do you think that living in a world of turmoil and terror in perilous times, and being able to have peace of heart and mind is meaningful? This is a part of the goodness of God to you.

The Lord promises our reward when He says, "I will honor you." He will bless us. When we are thinking like Christians ought to think, we would rather have the goodness, blessing, and honor of God than anything else this world has to offer. His reward is His honor on our lives. This comes from dying to self, and desiring to bring glory to the Lord.

Our Separation to God

Our separation results from the presence of God with us. He separates us by His presence. His presence with us makes us different.

This same passage us that it is God who separates us from *"all the people that are upon the face of the earth"* (Exodus 33:16).

REASON

In John 12:27-28, the Bible says, “*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*”

Here is something that is easily misunderstood. In verse twenty-four He says, “*if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” Is the reason for true Christian service “*much fruit*”? The answer is no. The fruit bearing comes as God works by His quickening, life-giving Spirit when we die to self. The Bible says in John 15:1-5,

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Of course, we are to labor and to work hard, but the Lord said, “*Without me ye can do nothing.*” Are we going to take all of the glory for the fruit? Remember that there are no magic formulas for the increase. The Lord gives the increase. May the Lord deliver us from our desires for success and deliver us to a burning desire for His glory.

The Bible goes on to say, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.*” We ought to thank God for His withering work just as we thank Him for his fruit-producing

work. It is the same Spirit of God producing the fruit who also withers the things in our lives that do not bring glory to God.

John 15:8 says, “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*” He said, “It is not about the much fruit. It is about glorifying the Lord.” If you make fruit-bearing the goal, then you will do anything to produce results.

We serve the Lord because of what He has done for us not in order to get something from Him.

The reason for serving the Lord is that God is glorified. The reason we serve the Lord is not to see how many people we can reach, but to glorify God. The reason that we serve the Lord is for the Lord. He is to be glorified. We know that without Him we can do nothing.



THE LAST ENEMY

by W. J. Mosier

The last enemy destroyed in the believer is Self. It dies hard. It will make any concessions if allowed to live. Self will permit the believer to do anything, give anything, sacrifice anything, suffer anything, be anything, go anywhere, take any liberties, bear any crosses, afflict soul or body to any degree—anything if it can only hold sway.

It will allow victory over pride, penuriousness and passion, if not destroyed itself. It will permit any number of rivals so long as it can be promised the first place. It will consent to live in a hovel, in a garret, in the slums, in far-away heathendom, if only its life can be spared. It will endure any garb, any fare, any menial service rather than surrender.

But this concession must not be granted. Self is too great a foe to the child of God. It is everywhere present. It is the fly that spoils the ointment, the little fox that spoils the vine. It provokes God and man and its own possessor. It drives to insomnia, invalidism and insanity. It produces disorder and derangement in the whole physical, mental, moral and spiritual constitution. It talks back, excuses and vindicates itself, and never apologizes. It must die.



THE HABIT of SAYING NO

by Dr. F.B. Meyer

If we will acquire the habit of saying ‘No!’ not only to our bad, but to our good self; if we will daily deliver ourselves up to death for Jesus’ sake; if we will take up our cross and follow the Master, though it be to His grave, we will become increasingly conscious of being possessed by a richer, deeper, Diviner life than our own.