

Marta

WOMENS CHALLENGE SMALL GROUP
March 1994

"WILL YOU ALSO GO AWAY?" JOHN 6:67

I chose this verse because each stage of life has its own peculiar temptations. When a new Christian, this verse had a very strong impact on me when I had to decide *if I was going to stay with the Lord.*

Now, these words have a different impact on me. The last month it is as if Christ is asking whether I will choose to go on learning and go on growing instead of stepping "off the track" and let the younger, more energetic people take over. As you get older, the body does not work the way it does when it was young, the mental energy becomes more difficult and somehow sleep seems more appealing. I can see that for me, a deeper kind of discipline is going to be required. Because the physical energy is less, more spiritual and mental energy will have to be exercised. And, that means more time with the Lord and more personal study in the Word.

Read March 9, Oswald Sanders *My Utmost For His Highest.*

Why did those "many" leave? I think they considered the requirements Jesus was laying out and decided, "It's too hard to be a disciple," so they quit. I am sure that each of us in this room has come to a time when we had to consider whether or not we would go on with the Lord...and not one of us quit then. But I wonder how many of us are getting discouraged? Or thinking, "It's too hard to go on." How many of us are at that time when Jesus is asking us again, "Will you also go away?"

Chambers says:

"The things that discourage and hurt us show where we get our aid in times of distress. Jesus Christ was never discouraged because he was always went to His Father. Until a worker knows the aid of God he is in danger of becoming a stumbling-block to others souls."

"Discouragement always comes when we insist on having our own way."

"Our discouragement arises from egotism. Discouragement is 'disenchanted egotism' - the heart knocked out of what I want."

I think most of us are tempted to shrink back in times of discouragement, possibly even quit.

How do we handle (felt) failure?

- withdraw, sleep, "I don't know how or if I can handle things."
- function, try to do everything I can to fix it, or feel helpless.
- function at things or work where I can see accomplishment.
- withdraw, judge motives, long for "my time."
- feel inadequate, get anxious, find something to enjoy, feel overwhelmed, distract myself and not think about the problem.

Solutions: Recognizes need of assurance with God.

Needs to see my part/God's part.

Look not so much as to who gets the credit, but that God's work gets done.

Go back to God, prayer.

Need to initiate

Hebrews 6:1, says, "Let us go on to maturity." For us as disciplers, there are a couple of things that we need to be aware of so that we do not lose heart. We will become discouraged at times, but not lose heart.

1. "We have nothing whatever to do with what men call success or failure. If God's command is clear; and the constraint of His Spirit is clear, we have nothing to do with the *result* of our obedience." "God's purpose for you is that you depend upon Him and His power *now*; that you see Him walking on the waves - no shore in sight, no success, just the absolute certainty that it is all right because you see Him." Oswald Chambers, *The Best From All His Books*, pg. 341.

2. God is looking for *faithfulness* and *obedience* in our relationship with Him. That's all. We remain faithful. He is responsible for the growth. We cannot change another person. But we can be faithful. C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*, pp. 41, 46 says:

"God has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable (unyielding, not to be persuaded or moved by entreaties) sense...Love, in its own nature, demands the perfecting of the beloved:...mere 'kindness' which tolerates anything except suffering in its object is, in that respect, at the opposite pole from Love."

This brings up two concerns:

CONCERN #1:

We have to develop a healthy balance between the spiritual growth of our disciple, while continuing to grow ourselves. Both are mutually needed and each makes the other more effective. Luke 6:40. We can only teach what we know and have applied in our own life. And, we need the Power of God to know what to apply when.

As disciplers, we may stop too soon. We know enough to get by, so mentally and spiritually want to take a rest, maybe retire. Maybe we're tired of the struggles, or the feelings that we're never going to be able to do enough, so why not just get off the track? John 6:67. Prov. 24:10 says, "If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited."

Learning and growth only occurs in tension. Without tension there is no reason or motivation for change. However, too much tension produces discouragement, even quitting. For us as disciplers, much of the tension is caused by the discrepancies we see between *what we do* and *what we would like to be able to do*. For that reason, we need to identify and solve the discrepancies in our personal lives.

Our disciples need to observe our struggles while we grow and fail. There are some areas where we, as "life-giving leaders" need to pay attention to:

Discuss each one:

- * *Learn from* and not be inhibited by the possibility of failure. If we are looking for credit, or afraid of losing our "reputation," we will not be able to discuss with others our "perceived" failures. What are your expectations for yourself? What do you expect from your disciple? That's why setting goals is so important.

- * *Make decisions based on information and evidence* rather than on emotion. Maybe you hear a report of something your disciple did, and immediately begin either (a) a war in your head about how you are going to confront her, or (b) you will get into self-pity. I didn't do all I "should" or "could" and that's why she is having trouble. Remember, others will have good input in your disciple's life. You are not the only one responsible for her spiritual growth.

I think the reason I have felt so much discouragement this past month is because I cannot identify an area where I have grown, or where I am even pressing on towards new growth. That's discouragement!

- a. The issue in the Counseling Department has been resolved, but the department has changed so much that I no longer *feel* effective. And, being the only counselor, I do not have peers in that field to relate to or to be challenged by. (Here is where I really have to make decisions based on information and evidence rather than on emotions!)
- c. Bible Study. Doing just enough to put teachings together for the College Group. But not study on my own for my own personal growth.
- d. Prayer. Minimal. The more discouragement I feel, the harder it is to go to God.
- e. Disciples. Inconsistent times. Because the College Bible Study has changed into having study groups rather than ministry teams, I am again building new relationships. It takes time to observe and pray to find a new disciple. (Patty - discipling in that sphere is a foreign word. "Nobody has ever done it.")

In times of discouragement, we feel all alone. It's hard to talk to others because they seem so successful. If discipling is easy for them, and it is hard for me, there must be something wrong with me. So, it is easy to put yourself in a position where you begin thinking, "I don't know what to do, and I don't know who to talk to about it."

Remember, God is looking for faithfulness. C. S. Lewis in *Letters*, pg. 223, says: "Continue seeking Him with seriousness. Unless he wanted you, you would not be wanting Him."

Because of this time of discouragement - I have prayed more and signed up for a class. I *feel* discouraged. But, I have been faithful.

CONCERN #2:

Another reason for discouragement is maybe your disciple is starting to rebel, or its hard to see a vision for her, or she's gone back to the world. What are some (perceived, felt) failures:

When your disciple talks about leaving the home church;
begins to rebel;
questions you, gets critical;
is more caught up with a boyfriend than God;
when your disciple says that she doesn't want to consider discipling someone else (no second generation).

Note: You may be the first stable person in your disciple's life, i.e., the first one who has pressed in on her weaknesses, sin areas; the first one who has disciplined her.

Note: You are not responsible for the disciple's whole life - others have input, too. Different input in different areas, i.e., teaching, counseling, studying.

I went to a baby shower this week, and Kip handed out a sheet of paper talking about the *Possible* and the *Impossible* ways for a mother to take care of a child. These same things apply for a disciple. We are in a real sense spiritual "parents." (1 Thess. 2:7-12). I changed just a few words:

"We disciplers must take care of the possible and trust God for the impossible. We are to love, affirm, encourage, teach, listen, and pray for the disciple. We *cannot* convict of sin, create hunger and thirst after God, or convert. These are miracles, and miracles are not in our department.

MY PART (The Possible)
love - love expressed
pray intelligently
logically, urgently,
without ceasing, in faith
enjoy being a discipler
provide a warm relationship
minister to their physical
and emotional needs as
I am able.

GOD'S PART (The Impossible)
conviction of sin
create a hunger and thirst for
righteousness
bring to place of total commitment
showing us ourselves as we *really*
are (without discouraging us)
continually fill us with the Holy
Spirit for our sanctification
and His service.

PRAYER FOR OUR DISCIPLE

"Holy Father, keep through Your Own Name those who You gave to me to disciple...I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from evil...Sanctify them through Your Truth; Your Word is Truth...*for their sakes I sanctify myself*, that they also may be sanctified through the truth...Father, I desire that they also, whom You have entrusted to me, will be perfected in unity, so that the world will know that You love them, and the love with which you love Christ will be in them." John 17:11-26.

It was after this prayer, that Christ went into His suffering for our sake. Let us learn to suffer for righteousness sake, as well. Let us, as Paul says in Phil. 3:8-12, "Count all things to be loss in view of the

surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings...not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Jesus Christ."