

# THE BIBLICAL GOALS OF EDIFICATION

## Discipleship Message #9: A Biblical Philosophy of Edification, Part 2

**This is our final message on the Biblical Philosophy of Discipleship.**

- We know what discipleship is: (Luke 6.40; Rom 8.29) It is the spiritual growth process of becoming like Jesus in both character and conduct.
- Therefore, discipleship *begins* with *evangelism* (salvation) and *continues* through *edification* (sanctification).

**We've seen that biblical evangelism has both *means* and *goals*:**

- The means of evangelism (salvation) are the components to the process through which God takes a sinner in order to make him a saint.
  1. The personal conviction of the sinner
  2. The preaching of the cross to the sinner
  3. The conversion of the sinners (repentance and faith)
  4. The regeneration of the sinner by the Spirit of God (and all that it entails: justification, et al).
- The goals of evangelism are what God expects of us in the process of saving a sinner (the goals are “our part” in the process of making/creating a disciple).
  1. Go: We need to intentionally seek out sinners, just like Jesus did.
  2. Preach: We need to communicate the gospel (the message of the cross) to the sinners we find.

**Last week we started looking at biblical edification, and it also has both *means* and *goals*.**

- The means of edification are the components of the spiritual growth process through which God conforms us to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
  1. Identification with Christ
  2. Knowledge of the Bible
  3. Obedience to the Bible
  4. Suffering (Enduring Suffering)
  5. An Exchanged Life (Consistency)
- In this message, we are going to finish up our study of the Biblical Philosophy of Discipleship by looking at the goals of edification (what is “our part” in growing in Christ-likeness or helping others grow?).
  1. Commitment to the Word of God
  2. Commitment to the Local Church
  3. Commitment to the Fellowship of the Saints
  4. Commitment to Ministry

(Luke 14.25-33, esp. v28: “counteth the cost”) This aspect of discipleship will be important to understand in this lesson: What is the “cost” of discipleship—what “price” do we have to “pay” to grow in Christ?

- Obviously, God give the increase (He saves us and He sanctifies us). God makes us grow. But, just as obvious in the call to “Follow me!” is the implication of commitment.
- The cost of discipleship (the price we must pay to be and make disciples) is commitment:
  - ✓ In salvation, you “commit” to Christ (commit to follow Him instead of sin and self). That commitment manifests itself in repentance and faith, and then God saves you.

- ✓ Today we are going to see that commitment is what makes the difference between a growing disciple and a stagnant disciple—between mediocrity and maturity. It's not our commitment that makes us grow (God gives the increase), but without commitment on our part, God will give no increase.
- ✓ Greater growth requires greater commitment and (v30) the day we decide that don't want to commitment anymore than we already have... that's the day we stop growing.

If you are not satisfied with your spiritual growth in Christ-likeness, take the four goals of edification and evaluate your commitment level to each one of them..

## **I. Goal #1: Commitment to the Word of God**

### **A. A disciple must be committed to both learning the Bible and doing what it says.**

1. In order to grow in Christ (in order for edification to take place), the disciple *must be* committed to both *learning* and *doing* what the Bible says.
2. (Luke 6.46-49) Following the Lord implies both *hearing* and *doing* His Word—learning and applying what the Scripture says.
3. (2Tim 3.16-17) In order for spiritual growth to occur (in order to be perfected), the disciple must *learn* doctrine and then *apply* that doctrine through reproof, correction, and instruction.

### **B. This goal touches on at least two of the means of edification.**

1. Knowledge of the Bible: We ought to be committed to growing in our knowledge of Scripture always (it's never enough when it comes to Bible knowledge).
2. Obedience to the Bible: The best “follow-up” advice you can give in a witness encounter is this: “Read the Bible daily and do what it says.”

### **C. Without a commitment to the Word of God, the disciple will not grow.**

1. And if we want to continue to grow, we need to continue to make a greater and greater commitment to the Bible—leaning it and obeying it.
2. Side Note: This is one of the reasons we started Harvest Baptist Church. We want a church that takes Scripture, and our commitment to learning and obeying Scripture, seriously.

## **II. Goal #2: Commitment to the Local Church**

### **A. During our dispensation (the Church Age), God has established the local church as the “institution” through which He is accomplishing His plan and purpose.**

1. (1Tim 3.15) The local church is the pillar and ground of the truth—it is the essential and necessary structure for following Christ today.
2. (Eph 4.11-12) Only when the saint commits to the local church (with her leadership structure; v11) will he grow in perfection (v12).

### **B. When we gather together as a congregation, two things take place that are essential to growth:**

1. Pastors: God ministers to the congregation through the pastor(s) of that congregation.
  - a) (Acts 20.28-32) The pastor is the one who has been given the responsibility to “feed” the flock of God (his local congregation) and to “fend off the wolves.”
    - Without being committed to one local church, the saint will be malnourished and therefore easy prey for the enemy.
  - b) (1Tim 4.13-16) The pastor is the one God placed in the Body of Christ to teach doctrine and to exhort the saints to obey it.
  - c) The local church provides the necessary structure for church discipline.
    - (1) Spiritual growth requires a strong commitment to the local church because part of the growth process will include exhortation and (eventually) correction.

- (2) Without being *committed* to a local church, the disciple that receives exhortation and correction (including church discipline) will simply leave and look for another church.
- (3) Many today have forsaken the local church and actually think they can grow in Christ by listening to sermons on line. That does not result in spiritual growth because there is no personal relationship or personal accountability (no “church discipline”).
- d) We need to be committed to a local church because we need a pastor (who will teach us, exhort us, and even correct us when we need it).

2. **Members:** God ministers to the congregation through the members of that congregation.

- a) (1Cor 12.27) The members of a local church (notice the “ye” is not “we” in this context) are members of a body; they are uniquely joined together.
- b) (1Cor 12.7) In the local church the Spirit of God manifests Himself through the members (each and every one of them) “to profit withal.” And what is the “profit” for all...?
- c) (1Cor 14.26) The Spirit manifests Himself through the members of the local church, as we gather together as one local body, “unto edifying.”
- d) The saint must be a committed member of a local church to grow as God designed.

**C. The local church also plays a key role in our suffering.**

- 1. Remember: Suffering (enduring suffering) is one of the means God uses to conform us to Christ.
- 2. This church is our spiritual family and we will suffer just like brothers and sisters suffer as they grow to maturing in a physical family (we have to “learn to get along”).
  - And God will use the problems we have between us to grow us in Christ-likeness (in forgiveness, mercy, grace, and love).
- 3. This church is also our refuge from the suffering we enduring in the world.
  - We ought to be able to come here and know it’s “safe”; here we can rest and recuperate in order to get back out in the world and preach the Gospel to the lost.

**D. If we want to grow in Christ, we need a strong commitment to the local church.**

- 1. (Eph 2.19-22) Our growth happens when we are committed to being “built *together*.”
- 2. (Eph 4.16) Edification occurs when the members of a local church gather together and minister one to another in the love of Christ.
- 3. Without a growing commitment to *one* local church, the disciple will not grow in Christ as the Lord has designed.

**III. Goal #3: Commitment to the Fellowship of the Saints**

**A. The principle here is this: (Prov 13.20)** If we want to grow in Christ, we need friends who are zealous, passionate, and committed Christians—Christians who are more mature than we are.

- 1. This kind of fellowship will *motivate* us (because motivation is more “caught” than taught).
- 2. This kind of fellowship will provide us with *examples* we can follow/imitate in order to better follow Christ.

**B. For example: Means #1 of edification is identification with Christ.**

- 1. What does that look like in daily life? How do you actually do that?
- 2. Find a committed Christi who is *really* identified with Christ (take for example Mark Cahill) and follow his example in your own life context.
- 3. And what would be even better than a Mark Cahill (who lives in Atlanta) is to find a good example here in our own local church and commit to fellowship with him. That would make a difference!

**C. (Prov 27.17) In addition to being committed to the local church, we need to be committed to biblical fellowship with other committed Christians (in this church and in others).**

1. (1Cor 15.33) Commit to making friends and spending time with friends who are committed to Christ and the mission of being and making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. This is key to living and exchanged life consistently.

**IV. Goal #4: Commitment to the Ministry**

**A. Discipleship is the process of being conformed to the image of the Master, Jesus Christ.**

1. Jesus came to this earth to seek and to save the lost, and even though He ascended into heaven, He has not stopped doing that very same thing (through His Spirit and His ambassadors: us).
2. (Rom 8.16-17) God expects us, as His children, to “suffer with Christ”—to labor with Him under the same yoke, in the same field, doing the same work as He. That’s “ministry.”

**B. We need to grow consistently in our commitment to the work of the ministry that God gave us.**

1. (2Cor 5.18-20) We need greater and greater commitment to evangelism (if not, we will stagnate in our spiritual growth). We need to always set new goals and challenge ourselves to do more.
2. (Eph 4.11-16) We need greater and greater commitment to edification.
  - a) We not only need to be committed ourselves to these four goals (in order to be disciples); we also need to help others to do the same (in order to make disciples).
  - b) We are all called to the ministry of edification (just like we are all called to evangelize):
    - (1) We need to help other believers grow in knowledge of and obedience to the Bible.
    - (2) We need to help other believers grow in their commitment to the local church.
    - (3) We need to help other believers grow in the fellowship of the saints (maybe we need to be the zealous, commitment, mature examples that others can follow).
    - (4) We need to help other believers grow in their commitment to ministry, training them to evangelize the lost and to edify the saved.

**Our life's purpose is simple: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

- However, in order to fulfill that purpose we must accomplish the mission that God gave us to do.
- That mission is to be and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - ✓ We first need to be be saved and to be committed to following Christ and growing in Him.
  - ✓ Then we evangelize the lost and edify other believers in order to make disciples (a disciple is made/created through evangelism and made/molded into Christ's image through edification).
- Together, evangelism and edification (salvation and sanctification) form what we call “discipleship” and discipleship is our life—it's the reason we are here and the reason we started Harvest Baptist Church.

**How are you doing in your commitment to the Lord?**

1. How is your commitment to the Scripture—to learning the Bible and to obeying what it says?
2. How is your commitment to the local church (have you found a good one, have you committed)?
3. How is your commitment to the fellowship with other zealous, mature saints?
4. How is your commitment to ministry—to evangelizing the lost and to edifying the saved?

**This is why we started Harvest Baptist Church:** To grow in Christ together as His disciples and to help others do the same. That is what we are all about, nothing more and nothing less.