

Discipleship Lesson 23

Partnership

Key Memory Verse:

*And the things that you have heard from me
among many witnesses, commit these to faith-
ful men who will be able to teach others also.*

2 Timothy 2:2



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Partnership

Why Is It So Important?

This final lesson is a series of inspirational stories about the importance of partnership. Discipleship is learning the power of partnership. **Please read each story carefully and ponder the principles.**

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to re-emphasize the importance of discipleship or "Partnership." Also, it is to encourage you to take the next step and become a trained discipler. Lastly, it is to evaluate how you have grown in your discipleship experience.

I. Discipleship Results in Partnership

A. True partnership means work.

Discipleship is the key to building healthy Christians, which results in the growth of healthy churches. When you enter into a discipleship commitment, you become another person's spiritual partner.

The Bible tells us that there is tremendous power in partnership. Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."

Do you recall when Edmund Hillary and his guide, Tenzin Norgay, made their historic climb of Mt. Everest? Coming down from the peak, Hillary suddenly lost his footing. Norgay held the line taut and kept them both from falling by digging his axe into the ice. Later, Norgay refused any special credit for saving Hillary's life. He considered it a routine part of the job. As he put it, "Mountain climbers always help each other."

“One person seeking glory doesn’t accomplish much; everything we have done has been the result of people working together to meet our common goals.”—Red Auerbach, General Manager, Boston Celtics.

B. True partnership means both giving and receiving.

You’re probably familiar with the biography of Helen Keller. It’s the moving story of a deaf and blind girl who would have grown up severely disadvantaged if not for a compassionate woman named Anne Sullivan.

When the two of them met, young Helen was in a cage and would only growl at her new teacher. But Anne, nearly blind herself due to a childhood fever, worked with Helen on every aspect of her life: perception, recognition, personal habits, manners, and speech. In time, the two of them became inseparable partners. By the time Helen reached adulthood, she was a changed woman. She was communicating efficiently, eating by herself, and taking care of her personal needs. Anne Sullivan had brought about an absolute transformation in her protégé, helping her to become an educated, self-sufficient woman.

What you may not know is that Anne Sullivan later experienced her own life crisis. When she suffered a relapse of her previous childhood condition, she became completely blind. Ironically, the “miracle worker” was in need of someone to help her. Can you guess who stepped forward to fill the role? Helen Keller! The recipient of Anne’s encouragement and instruction extended her hand to her former mentor. Helen was able to give back to the very one who had given so much to her.

Partnership is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organized objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. Simply put, it is less *me* and more *we*.

We have not come together to compete with one another but to complete one another.

Notes and Questions



Notes and Questions:

C. True partnership means no one can do it all alone.

The Hebrews must have thought Moses could do it all himself. As they traveled across the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land, they followed this amazing man who came through with miracles from God every time they needed anything. One astonishing miracle followed another: the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, water from a rock, and manna from heaven.

After a while, I think the people simply began to expect miracles from Moses. Sure, deep down they knew he was just a man. They began to believe that nothing was beyond him. They thought he could do it all himself.

But one day God reminded them of Moses's limitations. It was the day the Amalekites were about to attack the Israeli camp. Moses called upon Joshua, his military leader, asking him to select some warriors. They would go and face the Amalekites and fight, and Moses would climb to the top of a nearby hill to hold up the rod of God in his hands. As long as he had his hands raised, God would grant them victory.

For a while, it worked. Joshua and his small band of warriors were defeating the superior army of their enemy. But after a while they began to lose. Why? Moses, the man who had led them out of slavery and through the parted Red Sea, simply couldn't hold up his hands any longer.

If that had been the end of the story, it would also have been the end of the Hebrews. But two men, Aaron and Hur, climbed up next to Moses, stood on his left and right, and held up his hands until Joshua and his men were completely victorious.

The Hebrews won a war that day, and in the process, they were reminded of a most important principle—even God's anointed leaders need partners to help them accomplish His mighty work. When we partner with God's anointed leaders, God partners with us.

D. True partnership means taking a risk.

In April of 1940, German tanks rumbled across the borders of yet another peaceful European country—Denmark. Already possessing control of Austria, Czechoslovakia and

Poland, the powerful Nazi invaders encountered little resistance from the small northern nation.

Soon other countries fell to the Germans as well: Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France—their people bullied, bloodied, and beaten down. As part of their systematic method of intimidation and oppression, the Germans announced that every Dane of Jewish descent would be required to wear a yellow Star of David. They had done the same thing in Germany. Any Jew who failed to comply would be put to death. The Star of David, a proud symbol of their Jewish faith and culture, would be used to mark them as undesirable members of society—to rob them of their possessions, their dignity, and even their lives.

The Danish government and its people were in no position to do battle against the powerful German army. But their leader, King Christian the Tenth, made a bold move to prevent the Nazis from persecuting the Jewish people among them, one that risked his own life. After the proclamation was made by the occupying army, the Danish monarch called for all of his country's citizens to wear the Star of David, for every Danish household to stand as partners with their Jewish neighbors.

What would you have done had you lived in Denmark in 1940? Tremendous fear must have gripped the hearts of those first Gentile citizens to venture from their homes the morning after the king's announcement. Would they be the only ones who had heeded the call? Would they be singled out? Would they be scooped up along with the Jews and executed?

What they saw was nothing short of a miracle. There were stars of David everywhere. The Jews among them wept when they saw the people's love and support. And because the people stood together, the Nazis' full plan of persecution against the Jews was never carried out in that country. Partnerships of value always involve risk.

- E. **True partnership means multiplying our potential and extending our reach.**

Think of autumn. Think of geese flying south for the winter. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately behind it. By flying in a V formation, a flock of geese adds at least 72 percent to its flying range compared to each bird flying on its own. That's a great model of synergy—the ability to accomplish more together than apart.



Notes and Questions:

When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the formation and another goose flies point for a while. In doing this they model shared responsibility—leadership that is truly a team effort, not the work of a lone ranger.

As they fly, the geese in the back honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed and momentum. In doing this they model the power of encouragement and affirmation. Everyone performs better with cheerleaders around them.

And finally, any time a goose gets sick or it is wounded and falls out of formation, two geese drop out and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is able to fly again or is dead. They then join another formation to catch up with their group. In doing this they model the care that emerges within a group when it works together to reach a common goal. Partnership multiplies our potential and extends our reach.

F. True partnership means holding the rope.

On August 1, 1786, William Carey became an ordained minister. Though just twenty-five years old, a great vision stirred within his soul, a vision he would never have realized without the faithful partnership of a few close friends.

During his first year in ministry, Carey suggested that his minister's fraternity send people to Asia to share the gospel. His suggestion was met with harsh rebuke from Mr. Ryland, the chairman.

"Young man, sit down!" he retorted. "You're an enthusiast. When God desires to converse with the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you or me."

Carey was devastated. His colleagues and peers saw his ideas as wildly imaginative, and he was considered a renegade. Everywhere he turned he met with opposition. But, just when he was ready to abandon his vision, he met Thomas Potts, a man who'd been to America and had seen the plight of both the Indians and the Africans in the slave trade. He challenged Carey to act on his vision for the sake of the Indian people.

Carey's enthusiasm was rekindled, but he also began to realize that his dreams would never be fulfilled on his own. In time, God brought other people who offered encouragement and help. One day Carey sat these friends down and showed them how he intended to reach the people of India. He held up a common, everyday rope.

"I will go down to India," he said, "if you will hold the rope." By "holding the rope" he meant praying for him consistently, supporting him financially, and communicating to the churches back in England regularly. They gladly agreed. They would become partners in his vision.

Carey did go to India and made possible the translation of the Bible into eleven languages. By late 1792, a resolution was adopted creating the first protestant mission agency ever. Many have called Carey the father of modern missions, but he viewed his position differently. He called his relationship with the people back home a "brotherhood." He may have been the one to travel to India, but he knew that it was possible only because of the partners back in England who were "holding the rope." Even partners who remain in the background share in the rewards.

G. True partnership means being a loyal friend.

It was sheer jealousy that made King Saul want David dead. Young and loyal, David was baffled by his monarch's attitude, and he went into hiding. To survive he needed an ally. Who did God provide him with? Saul's own son, the man everyone presumed would succeed Saul on his thrown. Jonathan pledged his friendship to David, and even gave him his sword, his armor, and his robe.

Jonathan exhibited all the characteristics of a true friend and dedicated partner. First, he made himself available. He was totally and completely open to whatever action was needed on David's behalf. He said to his friend, "Whatever you say, I will do it for you." His time was David's time.

Second, he was dependable. Out of love, he initiated a covenant with David. He had nothing to gain and everything to lose by remaining true to the oath he gave David, but he stuck by it anyway.

Third, he was vulnerable. When he defended David to his father, he risked more than his reputation or even his future position. He risked his very life.

Finally, Jonathan was responsible. Once Jonathan saw how resolute Saul was on killing David, he went to David and warned him to leave, even though he suspected that he would never see his best friend again, and he was right. Both Jonathan and his father, Saul, died in war.



Notes and Questions:

David became the next king of Israel. In those days, most monarchs cleaned house by tracking down and killing every one of their predecessor's descendants. David did search for the descendants of Jonathan, and he found one, a crippled man named Mephibosheth. But David treated him like royalty and loved him as if he were his own family.

You see, before David and Jonathan parted that last time, they promised to watch after each other's descendants. And David was true to his word. That was the least he could do for his loyal friend, the best partner anyone could ever have. The loyalty of great partnerships lives beyond us.

H. True partnership means helping others go further than you.

Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee's Pharisee. With a keen mind and absolute dedication to the Law, he made it his personal mission to track down and persecute Jews who followed "the Way" of Jesus Christ. But as every believer knows, Saul met Christ on the road to Damascus, and it changed his life. It even changed his name; from then on he became known as Paul.

His conversion caused such uproar in Damascus that he had to escape secretly one night to avoid assassination. Paul decided to return to Jerusalem, but when he got there, he was shunned. His old colleagues rejected him, and his new Christian brothers didn't trust him. The memory of Paul encouraging the Jews to stone Stephen to death must have been too strong in their minds. Daily, he tried to approach the disciples, but they would have nothing to do with him. He was an outcast.

One day a man named Joseph approached Paul. He was one of the early leaders in the Jerusalem church. He took Paul in and insisted on personally escorting him to Peter, James, and the other elders in Jerusalem. When they doubted Paul's sincerity, Joseph defended him as a genuine disciple of Jesus, knowing Paul had preached Christ fearlessly in Damascus. Soon, all of the believers welcomed him into their fellowship and ministry.

Paul was grateful to Joseph, who had a knack for seeing both the needs and the potential of the people he met. In fact, Joseph often reached out to underdogs. For that, the apostles even gave him the nickname Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement.” Maybe he did it because he had once been an underdog himself. It’s said that Joseph was one of two men considered to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle, but when lots were cast, Matthias was chosen instead. Joseph never complained. He just kept on encouraging others.

In time, Paul and Joseph became close friends and ministry partners. Together they traveled far and wide, preaching the gospel. And Joseph didn’t even mind when Paul passed him by and became his leader. Who was in charge wasn’t important. What mattered was the partnership and the ability to do great things together for God. The person you help may become your greatest partner.

I. True partnership means letting God always be your partner.

What would you have done if you’d been Abraham? When he was seventy-five years old, God told Abraham he would have a son. God promised that Abraham’s name would be great and all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. In other words, God was choosing Abraham to be His partner.

But Abraham had to wait twenty-five years for that son to be born. He and his wife had long passed childbearing age, yet God was true to His word and Isaac was born as Abraham approached age one hundred.

Isaac was the joy and delight of his parents. So imagine how Abraham felt when God asked him to do the unthinkable—to take the boy to a faraway mountain and offer him up as a sacrifice.

What Abraham couldn’t know back then as he traveled obediently toward the mountain was that God was doing something far bigger than what was affecting Abraham’s small family. When Abraham told Isaac, “God will provide the lamb,” his words applied not only to the circumstances that day, but also to the salvation of mankind. As a covenant partner, God wouldn’t ask Abraham to do something He wasn’t prepared to do Himself. God spared Isaac that day, but when the time came two thousand years later, He gave His own Son so that we might live. For that we can all be eternally grateful. There is no greater partner than God.

Notes and Questions:

II. Evaluate Your Spiritual Growth

Lesson 1	The Word of God	Lesson 13	The Local Church
Lesson 2	Salvation	Lesson 14	Stewardship
Lesson 3	Eternal Security	Lesson 15	Giving
Lesson 4	Baptism	Lesson 16	Relationships
Lesson 5	The Lord's Supper	Lesson 17	My Job and Employer
Lesson 6	Prayer	Lesson 18	The Judgment Seat
Lesson 7	Sin	Lesson 19	Key Values
Lesson 8	God's will	Lesson 20	The Filling of the Spirit
Lesson 9	Marriage: Husband	Lesson 21	Spiritual Gifts
Lesson 10	Marriage: Wife	Lesson 22	Evangelism
Lesson 11	The Attributes of God	Lesson 23	Partnership
Lesson 12	The Trinity		

- A. Listed above are the twenty-three lessons you completed. Please list the three lessons that were most helpful to you and why.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- B. In what two spiritual areas has your life changed because of this discipleship program? Example: Good and bad habits, attitudes, and actions that have changed.

1. _____
2. _____

- C. If you could change anything about the discipleship material or methods, what would you change?

Conclusion

Your greatest achievement in life is to help someone else climb higher. You can fulfill this achievement in life by taking the next step in discipleship by becoming a spiritual partner to someone else, to a person like you, who wants to climb higher in their spiritual journey.

Congratulations on finishing this series of lessons designed to help you grow spiritually. You should feel a great sense of accomplishment and excitement about the next step in your training to be a discipler.

Record the people that you have discipled and the date.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Notes and Questions