

# **Students in the University of the Spirit**

**23 October 2016**

Last week I spoke about a principle of life that tends to repeat itself throughout our lives as believers. This principle is "Taking Away to Establish". We saw how God is so committed to us that He doesn't want to leave us just the way we are, but wants to change us from one degree of glory to the next. This entails some things having to be taken away in order for new and better things to be established that God has in mind for us. We are not uninvolved bystanders of this process of change - we have an active part to play in the changes that God wants to bring about in our lives. It is as if we are in a continuous process of education as God moves us forward.

Education has recently come into sharp focus around the country, not always for the right reasons though.

This is perhaps the worst time of the year for parents and children - its exam time. It is possibly worse for the parents who get all

uptight and stressed out while the kids seem to be so cool and casual about it.

But it is not only the children who are students; we are all still students and we still have so much to learn and our education is nowhere near over. As believers we are in a continuous education that is designed by God to grow us from one degree of glory to the next. Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not we are all students in the University of the Spirit.

As Christians we are disciples of Christ and that word "disciple" in the original Greek of the New Testament is "mathetes" which means a pupil of a teacher, or an apprentice to a master craftsman. Our English word "disciple" comes from Latin "discipulus" which means "learner". But for believers it has a much richer and deeper meaning than simply being a student or a learner - it carries the meaning of being attached to the teacher and becoming His follower in doctrine and in conduct of life. We are therefore all students in the class of Christ. We are involved in an ongoing education and are growing in our

knowledge of Him, of His word, His will and His way as we more and more are being conformed to His image.

This education process is often called discipleship and in order for it to be effective there has to be some structure. Just like schools, colleges, and universities have a disciplined and structured curriculum, codes of conduct, methods of evaluation and so on, so too is our education under Christ an orderly and structured education - a step by step, little by little process designed by God. It may appear to be unstructured and random at times, but God has a very specific plan and process for educating us. There is a very disciplined way in which He works in our lives to bring about His purposes in and through us. The way He educates me may be very different to the way He educates you. He knows exactly what the best way is to educate each individual - not a one size fits all.

Education requires discipline in order for it to be effective - both in the teaching and in the

learning. Just look at schools or universities where there is a lack of discipline and see how difficult the educating of the students is. A lack of discipline brings about an atmosphere of chaos and disorder. But where there is discipline you generally find peace and harmony which is so conducive to learning.

A case in point is the recent 'fees must fall' protests at universities throughout the country. Look at this video clip and tell me how much disciplined and orderly education is happening.

### ***Video clip***

Ok, turn to Hebrews 12:11 *"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"*.

Here the word "discipline" is used in an educational sense of being trained or educated. This word "Discipline" comes from the same root word as disciple and it speaks of instruction as well as correction. Notice in

this verse what the purpose of discipline is: it produces righteousness and peace.

Righteousness is conformity to Christ's standard of conduct for life and when we do conform to His standards it results in peace, harmony and order.

Without peace learning is very difficult - education relies on order for its effectiveness. So if there is no discipline, there will be disorder and a lack of peace which results in a lack of education or learning.

So for us as students in the University of the Spirit we must submit to the discipline of Christ in order for ongoing education and growth in God to occur.

Turn now to Mat 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"*. Here Christ, the great teacher, speaks of our education when He tells us to *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me"*. In ancient

times this symbolized being submitted and attached to the teacher and being under his discipline for the purpose of learning. We, in our own lives, must submit to Jesus and live under His discipline so that we may learn from Him.

What is this discipline? It is obeying the commands of Christ and living according to them. It is about what Heb 12:1-2 says: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"*.

It speaks of being disciplined in our living - living within the bounds and framework of God's word. God is a God of order and will not tolerate chaos and disorder in His people. Discipline is vital for peace and order in the church. Undisciplined Christian living will bring about chaos and disorder.

Disciplined Christian living is God's provision for peace and good order in the church and it promotes the necessary conditions for the education and growth of its members.

It is only by living within the discipline of God's word, according to His will and doing it His way that we can truly honour God and peace can reign, so that learning can be promoted and we can grow and become more and more like Christ.

The discipline of God's word is actually a place of safety and blessing for us. Every one of us should be aiming at the bullseye of living within the bounds and the framework of the disciplines of His word.

Yes, we are not there yet, but should be committed to moving from the real to the ideal.

Our growth as Christians depends on it - our learning will be greater and quicker by living disciplined Christian lives.

Now is the time for the bell to ring for each of us to go back into the classroom of the Spirit.

