

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #8

Phil. 2:3-8

ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS

Our Savior considered us more important than Himself. He gave up what He was and had to meet our great need of forgiveness and justification before the Father. He paid a debt He did not owe, because we had a debt we could not pay. Now, He instructs us to be like Him and do what He has and is doing for us.

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”— Phil. 2:3-8*

Considering others more important than ourselves, and assuming responsibility for them and their needs by giving our lives sacrificially to them in self-denial is the measure of our maturity as a disciple of Christ.

The Amazing Example Of Barnabas

Besides Christ, perhaps the greatest illustration of this essential aspect of the Christian life in the New Testament is found in the life of Barnabas. As much as any other person in the Bible, he illustrates the secret of fruitfulness that comes by **assuming responsibility for others**.

In the first place, Barnabas 1) **assumed responsibility for the infant church in Jerusalem**. Thousands of Jews like himself had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost and had been saved after hearing the gospel. They were away from their homes and relatives and in need of support as they stayed to learn and grow in their new life as believers. Barnabas, prompted by the Holy Spirit, decided that it was his responsibility to see to their needs.

*“And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”
— Acts 4:36-37*

Secondly, he 2) **assumed responsibility for the success of the apostles' ministry.** They were so encouraged by his deeds that they called him Bar-nabas, son of encouragement. His given name was Joseph, but because he lived a life that encouraged others, because he assumed responsibility for them, he became known to everyone as Barnabas, the name the apostles gave him.

Thirdly, he 3) **assumed responsibility for Saul**, when no one else would. Saul became the apostle Paul, but not without years of discipling by Barnabas. We must remember that Saul ravaged the church by putting many in prison and voting to put many Christians to death (Acts 26: 10-11). Then he had become a Christian but no one wanted to associate with him, let alone assume responsibility for him in the faith and in life.

*“And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **But Barnabas took hold of him** and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.”* — Acts 9:26-28

Later, after Barnabas left Jerusalem for ministry in Antioch, Paul made his way to Tarsus which was his home, but there is no record of there being Christians there. He stayed there until Barnabas came to find him and put him to work with him teaching Gentiles about the faith in Antioch. Again, Barnabas was the only one assuming responsibility for Saul and discipling him to maturity in Christ and usefulness in the work of discipling others.

Fourth, he 4) **assumed responsibility to be a pastor to the world's first Gentile church.**

*“But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and **they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.** Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”* — Acts 11:20-24

Fifth, he 5) **assumed responsibility for the first missionary journey.** It was Barnabas that led this first journey, not Saul. Saul was yet to be the primary leader (Acts 14:1-2). But, like a true Mentor, Barnabas gave way to the younger man as his experience and capabilities arose to the task. Whose job was it to take the gospel to the Gentiles in Asia Minor? Barnabas assumed this responsibility too.

*“Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me **Barnabas and Saul** for the work to which I have called them.”*

— Acts 13:1-2

Sixth, he 6) assumed responsibility for the needy Jerusalem church during the great famine.

*“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, **sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.**”*

— Acts 11:27-30

Since Barnabas was the chief Pastor and Teacher, it is reasonable that he led this effort for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. Given his track record, his own contribution was probably significant. This is the first gift of its kind in the history of the world! One culture gathering a substantial gift to give to another culture without strings attached. Gentile pagans giving to Jews who for centuries had avoided them as unclean dogs! **Barnabas led them to assume responsibility for the needs of others.**

In a seventh recorded instance, Barnabas, 7) **assumed responsibility for John Mark.**

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.”— Acts 12:25

This was surely Barnabas' idea. John Mark was his cousin. His mother seems to have been a widow (Acts 12:12). Because **assuming responsibility for others** was a way of life for Barnabas, his journey to Jerusalem with Saul to take the gift led him to offer to mentor the young man. It seems he did not have enough to do pastoring a large Gentile congregation, and running a seminary of sorts for pastors (Acts 13:1)! He offered to raise an immature and inexperienced young man who had no father.

All of this **assumption of responsibility** produced spiritual fruit in amazing quantities. He mentored two men no one else would, who eventually wrote about half of the New Testament. Surely without his assuming responsibility for them this would not have happened. The first Jewish church, the first Gentile church, the first missionary journey, all of these he assumed responsibility for to see them succeed.

Who have you assumed responsibility for? To what extent do you consider living for others as more important than living for yourself?

What Does It Mean Practically To Consider Others More Important Than Yourself, To Assume Responsibility For Others?

- It means purposing to live for others and not yourself.

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* — John 13:34-35

- It means giving up all you are and have to God, to use as He will – for others.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." — Eph 5:1-2

- It means to accept and love the people God chooses for you.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; ...Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." — Rom 15:2-7

- it means to give these folks, that the Lord brings or sends us to, what **they** need to grow and mature, regardless of the cost."

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." — Matt. 28:19-20

WHO Am I To Assume Responsibility For And Give My Life To?

So, who does the Lord tell us to assume responsibility for?

- 1) We are, in the first place, to assume responsibility for **our family members**.
(see Eph. 5:22-6:9)

*“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church”,
“Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

Our Lord did this as the oldest son, assuming responsibility for his widowed mother, even when he was on the cross, and near death. (see John 19:26-27)

- 2) We are, further, to assume responsibility, as a member of a local church, to employ ourselves for the good and the growth of **every member in our church**.
(see Eph. 4:15-16)

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” — 1 Pet. 4:10

- 3) Even beyond this, we are to assume responsibility to spend time in prayer for **all the Christians, in all the world**.

*“With **all** prayer and petition pray at **all** times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with **all** perseverance and petition for **all** the saints.”*
— Eph 6:18

Wow. What a responsibility. Millions and millions of God’s people. Notice the four “alls” in this command. All prayer, at all times, with all perseverance, for all the saints...But it is more than even this.

- 4) We are to assume responsibility to get the gospel to **all the nations of the world** and make disciples among these peoples for God, of those He draws to Himself through these self-denying efforts. So...we are to assume responsibility in some form **for all the unsaved souls on the earth!**

*"Go therefore and make disciples **of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
— Matt. 28:19-20

Welcome to the work the Lord wants to do with you and through you! As you do NOTHING from selfishness...but are considering **others** more important than yourself! Like the Lord did for you. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Him. This is the measure of our maturity in Christ.

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self evaluation.

Evaluating My Life As A Christian Who Assumes Responsibility For Others

1. Have you assumed responsibility for others? Who? Would you say that you consider them more important than yourself? _____

2. Have you assumed responsibility to disciple others for the Lord as He has commanded us? (*Mt. 28:18-20*) This takes commitment, study, and sacrifice. How would you rate yours? _____

3. Have you assumed responsibility for the success of the members of your church? Whose job do you really believe this is? _____

4. Have you assumed responsibility for those who have hurt you, or are hurting you – to be light to them by your responses, to pray for them, and to love them for the Lord? _____

5. Have you assumed responsibility as a friend, as a brother or sister in Christ, to go to a sinning brother or sister to tell them their fault and seek their repentance and restoration? Whose responsibility is this? (*Gal. 6:1-2, Mt 18:15-20*) _____

6. Have you assumed responsibility to see that the gospel gets to the lost? How? At what cost? _____

7. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to do to please your Lord and be growing in usefulness to Him in the work of the age? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Why do you go to church? Or not. Is the answer all about you – or is it all about others?
2. Are you a good listener? When another person is talking what are you thinking about?
3. The usefulness and fruitfulness that God says is the goal of maturing as a disciple (see 2 Pet. 1:5-8) are usefulness and fruitfulness in what?
4. Has God brought a “Barnabas” into your life for a season? Can you share about this?
5. What is the difference, if any, between assuming responsibility for someone and making a disciple? For us, as Christians, should there be?
6. I can't assume responsibility for everyone. How do I know who God wants me to invest in and when it is time to stop?
7. What is the difference between loving someone and assuming responsibility for them somehow? Does this mean I am to assume responsibility for my enemy? (see Lk. 6:27-35)
8. When you pray and “make your requests know unto God”, who are you making requests for? (James 4:3)

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for the second study session please consider doing the following:

Do a “BARNABAS PROJECT” this week. Here are some ideas to choose from:

1. Write notes of encouragement to three people every day.
2. Call someone every day and ask them how they are doing and how you can pray for them. Try to encourage them. Listen. Bless them.
3. Go and talk with a person who needs to be lovingly exhorted in a weak area or in a matter of sin. Barnabas would.
4. Think about who has been a Barnabas for you that you have never really thanked. Contact them after remembering their investment in you and what it meant.
5. Do something anonymous for 2 people. Ask the Lord who.
6. Ask the Lord to put on your heart 5 people to pray for every day in a specific area of their life you are aware of. Set aside time to intercede for them fervently every day.
7. Memorize Phil. 2:1-8.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue a “Barnabas project”, can you tell us how it went?
2. What are your plans for discipling others and what are your needs to do this?
3. When Paul exhorted Timothy to “finish his course” and “fulfill his ministry” what course was he talking about? How does this apply to us? (see 2 Tim. 4:5-8)

Prayer

Recommended For Further Study

- Walking His Trail by Steve Saint
- A Chance To Die, the life of Amy Carmichael by Elizabeth Elliot
- Fox’s Book Of Martyrs