

Training for Disciples

by William MacDonald

Effective ministry and discipling are limited by our own character and spiritual stature, and we must take heed to ourselves to avoid leading others into blind-spots or areas of neglect and disobedience.

Scripture: Matthew 7:3, Luke 6:40

Topics: "Discipleship", "Personal Growth"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of personal spiritual growth in the process of discipleship, reminding us that we cannot lead others beyond our own spiritual maturity. He illustrates this with the metaphor of the mote and the beam, highlighting that one must first address their own shortcomings before attempting to guide others. The effectiveness of our influence is directly tied to our character and obedience to God's commands. MacDonald stresses that a disciple can only reach the spiritual height of their teacher, underscoring the necessity for self-examination and integrity in ministry.

Transcript

“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” (Lu. 6:40)

In this passage the Lord Jesus was reminding the Twelve that when they went out to disciple others, they could not expect their disciples to progress further in the spiritual life than they themselves had attained. In other words, the extent of our positive influence on others is limited by what we ourselves are. Or as O. L. Clark said:

You cannot teach what you do not know;

You cannot lead where you do not go.

The Savior went on to reinforce the lesson by the story of the mote and the beam. A man is walking by a threshingfloor when a sudden gust of wind lands a tiny speck of chaff squarely in his eye. He rubs it, pulls the top lid down over the bottom one, and tries all the wellmeaning advice of his friends as to how to get the mote out of his eye. Then I come along with a telephone pole jutting out of my eye and say to him, “Here, my dear friend, let me help you get that atom out of your eye.” With his head at an angle, he looks up at me with his remaining good eye and says, “Don’t you think you ought to take the pole out of your own eye first?”

Of course! I can't help someone who is struggling with a besetting sin if I am even more shackled by that particular sin. I can't press on him obedience to some plain command of Scripture if I have not obeyed it myself. Any spiritual failure in my life seals my lips in that particular area.

When my disciple has become perfect, that is, when I have finished training him, I cannot expect him to be one centimeter above my own spiritual stature. He may progress up to my height, but I cannot lead him beyond it.

All of which emphasizes afresh that we must take heed to ourselves. Our ministry is to be a ministry of character. It's what's inside that counts. We may be eloquent, clever, and fast-talking but if there are blind-spots in our lives, areas of neglect and disobedience, then our discipling of others is a case of the blind leading the blind.

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