

## “A DISCIPLE’S CHECKPOINT”

(Philippians 4:1, 9)

*“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”*

*“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”*

A poor beggar boy had staked himself to a place on a bridge in Rome. He had an old violin, on which he played pitifully every day. He managed to coax a few pennies from pitying passersby, but it was hardly enough to justify the daily effort. However, since his only known skill seemed to be his “skill for begging,” he stayed forlornly at the task. One day a stranger happened by the spot, stopping for a few minutes to listen to the boy’s hopeless effort on the violin. Finally, the man stepped forward and asked for the boy’s violin. The puzzled boy jealously surrendered the instrument. After the stranger had tuned the violin a bit, he began to play a beautiful melody. A man paused to listen, and dropped some money into the hat. The crowd grew, the money increased, and when the man left sometime later, the boy had a sizeable sum. Who was the stranger? It was the great Nicolo Paganini, the renowned Italian violinist! Surely his help was appreciated by the young urchin, but the result was only temporary relief and it was only accomplished through the personal presence of the charitable “minister.” That is one way of addressing the need of the world. This kind of ministry is often done by people who are too ignorant, too indifferent, too mentally vagrant, too selfish, too complacent, too lazy to give real time, thought and effort to human need. Every ministering Christian has probably practiced this kind of ministry. His ministry is often inadvertently a mild effort designed to alleviate his own guilt, salve his own conscience, and satisfy himself that he is engaged in “Christian ministry.” This can be tragically true of any of us at any time, and any evaluation of it must not be used as a weapon against any other Christian brother or sister.

During the same decade in which the previous story developed, a little girl came one day to the door of Adelina Patti, the renowned Italian-Spanish soprano opera singer. As the beggar boy was doing on the bridge in Rome, the little girl was also soliciting financial help. The great singer gave her no money but invited her momentarily into her home and *asked her to sing*. Puzzled, the poor girl fulfilled the peculiar request and sang a familiar song. Patti detected a tiny spark of musical promise (or at least the slightest possibility) in her, and began to give her daily lessons. The great opera diva trained the young girl for seven years! Then she introduced her to the world of performing arts. For the rest of her life, the female urchin-turned-singer, trained intensively by Adelina Patti, earned a large salary and blessed multitudes of people.

The two contrasting accounts reveal the difference between two kinds of “ministry” that prevail in churches and among Christians. One requires momentary personal presence and offers only temporary relief. The other also gives personal presence, but that personal presence becomes interpersonal relationship by working close-up and hands-on with a trainee over a period of time. The second standard compounds its blessings into an expanding future by

teaching and training a disciple for permanent productivity. Thus, the “minister” trains other ministers instead of doing all the work himself. When this ministry is followed, the original teacher and trainer works his way out of a job by building others who will do the job in an enlarging way after he is gone. Another benefit attending the second standard is that lasting personal relationships result from the long training process.

The pattern of Jesus’ ministry, though it began with His personal Presence and often gave only temporary relief, exemplifies the second standard of ministry far more than the first. In fact, the *strategy* of Jesus did not depend at all upon the first standard, but rather on the second. But even the second standard has a shortfall in explaining the total strategy of Jesus Christ. His strategy not only promised large dividends to those who obey at the moment of hearing, but it promised (indeed, *necessitated*) ever-enlarging multiplication through all future generations as long as the process was implemented fully and correctly. The illustration of Adelina Patti, far superior to that of Nicolo Paganini, is still lacking in that it guaranteed no future multiplication. So its outcome finally was also only temporary. Whereas the relief ministry which Paganini rendered to the boy on the bridge lasted only for a day, Patti’s ministry to the girl lasted only for a lifetime. Though the second is certainly preferred over the first, *both are inferior* when compared to a ministry of multiplication which may last through indefinite future generations. Herein lies the genius of Jesus’ strategy: When it is properly implemented, it guarantees increasing numbers of leaders for all future generations—until the end of time. Not only so, but each follower is to become a leader, and each leader is built to train other leaders. So the test of “followship” and leadership in the “Jesus movement” is not in how many followers a leader has, but rather in how many true leaders he is building with a motivation and strategy to multiply. When properly implemented, this ministry of multiplication will never stop.

The Apostle Paul had somehow learned the strategy of Jesus to perfection. Indeed, he *exemplified* that strategy to perfection. Paul had never seen Jesus in the flesh, but here he was, part of the second generation of disciples after Christ, and proclaiming and practicing the strategy of Jesus. Read again the two verses that stand at the head of this study. Note that in Philippians 4:1, a high level of *relational* skill is indicated, and in Philippians 4:9, a high level of *revelational* skill is exemplified. Here is the perfect balance of a skilled disciple-maker. He practices open, honest, vulnerable, transparent *relational* skills (verse 1); that is, he builds and exemplifies such quality relationships as are remarkably reflected in verse one. Also, his teaching communication reveals great, dynamic, systematic, transferable *revelational* skills (verse 9), such as are remarkably reflected in verse nine. Anyone who can read these verses without pause and without amazement should be questioned as to his sensitivity. I want to ask you to join me in this study in examining the *relational* and *revelational* skills of a visionary, vocational disciple-maker.

## I. THE DISCIPLE-MAKER’S RELATIONAL SKILLS, verse 1

In verse one, the Apostle Paul reveals a *disciple-maker’s relational skills*. Give thoughtful attention and long meditation to this verse. Properly considered and understood, it will arrest and challenge the mind of the typical modern American Christian, and especially the male Christian of today. Strong men are seldom, if ever, heard talking like this today. “My brethren

dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” This is an incredibly rich expression of personal relationship, affection and devotion. Surely the Christians in the Philippian church were favorites of Paul.

The Apostle had written similar words to another of his favorite churches, the church at Thessalonica. In I Thessalonians 2:19-20, Paul wrote, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” This text proves the point of relational theology by making the two occurrences of the word “ye” emphatic (with *major* emphasis, which means that these words shout from the text). Do yourself a favor by reading these verses aloud, and *shout* the two occurrences of “ye” in the text. Thus, you will see the *other*-centeredness of the true Christian. In fact, in the first Thessalonian letter, Paul revealed his relational skills when he used the words “you,” “your,” and “yours” no less than 116 times in five short chapters! Paul lived an “inside-out” life, centered on others, and therein he differed from most Christians today who live “outside-in” lives, suctioning their environment for their own advantage and living for their own survival as believers.

### A. Interpreting the Verse

Let’s examine verse one under the microscope of meditation. Paul referred to the Philippian Christians as “my brethren.” Go back and read the chapter that contains the account of Paul’s own conversion (Acts 9) and you will be reminded of how very much the word “brother” meant to him (see Acts 9:17). When he was in a traumatized condition and uncertain as to his past, present or future, a warm-hearted layman came to him and addressed him as “brother Saul.” So he knew the full, warm meaning of this word when he addressed the Christians in Philippi as “my brethren.”

Then he called them his “dearly beloved.” When we use this term today, it is a completely idle, formal and conventional term (translate, *meaningless*), but not so for Paul. You see, Paul could afford to be extravagant with his love, because *he had an unlimited income*. I John 4:19 gives the Christian’s “much-love formula” when it says, “We love, because He first loved us.” The source and secret of a Christian’s love for others is found in this verse. If anybody has ever known the fathomless depths of Christ’s love, it was the Apostle Paul. So he was only personally distributing the richness of the love which he had first received.

“My dearly beloved and longed for.” Love never stands alone. It is always attended by desire. That love is far too sentimental that is not coupled with deep desire for the beloved, even the desire to *possess* the beloved. A lover always desires his beloved. He longs for his beloved and seeks the beloved’s supreme happiness and blessedness. How much can be done for other people by the ministry of sheer desire! No positive spiritual desire is ever wasted; it always helps to lift the one on whom it is placed. The deep spiritual desire of one committed believer for another person may be like an ocean tide; when it comes in, it lifts everything before it.

Paul called the Philippian believers “my joy and crown.” It is likely that the word “joy” refers to his present identification with them, and the word “crown” refers to the future he expects as a result of this present identification. Paul found both his present joy and his future

reward in *other people's victories!* This is an incredibly warm relational Christian. No wonder he had such impact on the Roman Empire! Let me ask you a practical question. If your coming crown is comprised of those you have won to Christ and disciplined to a ministry of future-generation multiplication, what will your crown be? If your crown is shaped by your ministry for, to, in, and through *others*, what will your crown be? If your crown is determined by your ministry of multiplication through *others*, what will your crown be?

“Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved,” is the strong counsel which Paul gave to his brothers and sisters in Christ in Philippi. The opposite of standing fast is giving ground or giving up. Paul says, Don't be enticed or seduced by passing fascinations or by worldly seductions. Don't follow a will-o'-the-wisp. Rivet your hearts to Christ and keep your feet in His pathway. Rest your faith totally on Him, and don't permit any distractions.

Some years ago, I found an apparently “innocent” verse in the obscurity of Genesis 49, and it has challenged me to perseverance over and over again. The verse simply says, “A troop shall overcome Gad, but he shall overcome at the last” (Genesis 49:19). Christian, ponder that verse carefully, and let God build its encouraging truth into your life. Paul later said to the unsteady Corinthians, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58). This is also the appeal here, to which all of Paul's love and grace and courtesy shown in this passage have been leading.

## **B. Implementing the Vocation**

Now, having used the microscope on the verse, let's “back away” and take an overview of the basic concept that is revealed here. It is a powerful picture of the relational living that is counseled and commanded throughout the New Testament, but which most Christians today know nothing about.

Jesus established this basic concept of relational living as the standard for His followers when He modeled it Himself in His incarnation. Frederick Dale Bruner said, “Jesus' ethic is conspicuously a neighbor-centered ethic, an other-person ethic; it is not merely an ethic of spiritual, physical, or mental self-cultivation. He said, in effect, ‘I want neighborliness and not individualism.’” He further established this basic concept *for us* by commanding it in His original call, the call which is clearly stated, for example, in Matthew 4:18-20. Here, He called His first followers, all later followers, and *us*, to a *school* from which there is no earthly graduation. “Follow Me,” He said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

It is incumbent upon me to say a very uncomfortable thing at this point. That original school of Jesus was *not a church school* (if you desire to challenge that, just read the Gospel accounts), and for very good reason. If the call into His school is reduced and confined to a church setting, that church setting becomes a convenient place to *hide* from the call, while salving ourselves with a very mild and very tame pursuit. This is clearly evident by moving widely among regular church goers. While a few fishermen emerge out of the masses who attend, most church attendance is for *enjoyment*, not *employment*. *Entitlement* rather than *entrustment* is the motive of multitudes as they go to church. *Personal survival* rather than

*practical service* is their goal. Incidentally, this motive is self-defeating, actually militating against its own fulfilment (see Matthew 16:25). How can any Christian leader find great comfort in the minority who are fishing, while the majority are “at ease in Zion?” This standard terribly misleads the majority (it *terribly misleads the majority!*), and terribly over-burdens the minority. Did Jesus really intend that there be a majority of pew potatoes in church, and a minority of fish-catchers out in the deep? *Furthermore, can this problem be corrected without individual disciple-making?* If it could be corrected by pulpiteering, surely the super-churches of the western world should have, by themselves, evangelized the entire world many times over by this late date in history. But clearly, such has not been the case. To see the alternative, let any believer follow a visionary disciple-maker on his world-impacting teaching missions all over the world, carefully examining both the method and the result of the teaching. Today, increasing numbers of motivated teaching laymen are taking up the mantle of such ministries, and the results are already beginning to accrue in fields over the world.

So regular church attendance, *while mandatory and vital*, must be kept in perspective, or it will become the means of *evading* the vocation. While Adam and Eve hid among the trees of the Garden, many, many Christians hide from the Mandate of the Master in the carved trees of church pews! Nonetheless, when Jesus issued this original call, He clearly and deliberately did *not* say, “Follow Me, and I will save your souls.” He called His followers, not merely to an experience of personal salvation, but to a fisherman’s vocation which places clear priority on *others*. This call does not promise *their* salvation (*that* is guaranteed from their first faith-response to Christ), but makes provision for the salvation of *others* through them. In His original pattern call, Jesus promises help to *others* through His disciples, not, first of all, bliss, happiness, salvation and gratification for themselves. Christian, ponder these terms carefully. You see, true Gospel understanding is *under-standing*, and it belongs only to those who put themselves under others to be sensitive to them, to support them, and to serve them.

I place the question before myself again: Does my Christian practice look like the practice of a vocational fishermen? What is the harbor? What are the boats? What are the nets? Where are the fishing waters? What is done in the harbor before and after the fish are caught? *What did Jesus mean when He said, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets?”* A church sign wrongly says, “Be a fisher of men. You catch them; God will clean them.” *God catches and cleans*, but He will only do it by using fishermen who are devoted to *others*. *Am I living a life that is “catching”?* Before we leave the fishing metaphor, it might also be remarked that fishing is a dirty, smelly, distasteful business, at least in the catching and cleaning. When the *consuming* begins (note that word; even the fish is caught for *someone else’s* consumption), that’s another story! In the Gospel enterprise, the Christian is to be both the consumer and the consumed. Proportionately, he is to *consume* enough of the Gospel and its benefits that he is able to *be consumed* without any loss on his part. He is like the burning bush in the Moses story. He is on fire, but not consumed, and the fire is of such a nature that it illumines his entire surrounding and attracts nomadic shepherds to its shining!

The intention of Jesus is inescapable. His disciples are to be *focused outward*—first, on their Master, then on the men upon whom He focuses His attention. As they focus on Him, they will notice that *His* eyes, in turn, are focused on other people and their needs. So here we can give a loose definition of a relational Christian: *A relational Christian is one who considers the*

*rights of others before his own feelings, and the feelings of others before his own rights.* In short, he consistently puts others before himself. Let me immediately test myself by this definition. Are my plans, performances and prayers focused on others? Read Philippians 4:1 again and see how relational Paul's heart really was.

Some of the greatest of Gospel illustrations, both negatively and positively, are found in classic literature. Recently, I re-read segments of Thornton Wilder's intriguing play entitled "Our Town." The young daughter Emily views life from a position of death (she is actually in the cemetery). She asks three pertinent questions, each of which negatively reveals a problem which only relational theology can solve. "Do any human beings ever realize life while they're living it?" "Are we always at the mercy of one self-centered passion after another?" "Don't we ever come close to each other?" Emily's questions are proper, though devastating.

A few years ago, I, along with my son Bryan and my daughter Shari, had the pleasure of traveling in England for three weeks. On the trip, we visited some twelve or more English castles. Those castles seem romantic today, but I continually tried to project myself into the walled lifestyle of those who lived in them. It has come to me again and again that many people today are like medieval castle-dwellers. High walls and deep moats surround them. They are invulnerable and without intimacy with other people. They have become prisoners of their own defenses, and they don't know what blessings they are missing by locking themselves away from others. Someone called them "toxic people," a good title for many. The toxicity of such people sometimes breaks into the daily news headlines like a tongue of flame from hell's furnace. Think of the news that originated at Columbine High or in Jonesboro, Arkansas, for memorable examples. Someone else called these people "basement people" (an echo of Jesus: "He who would exalt himself—even by the reverse exaltation of isolation—shall be *abased*"). They dwell in low places, and try to drag others down, too. This is Satan's age-long strategy, and such people are unwitting volunteers on his work force.

I found another incredible illustration of the same message in an anthology of fairy tales written by the renowned Hans Christian Andersen. It was a short story entitled "The Bottle." Briefly, it was the story of a bottle which had *once contained a message, but lost it* (Christian, beware), turned in upon itself, and *became only a bottleneck*. The last line of the story summarizes the tragedy: "The bottleneck did not recognize her either, nor did he listen to what she was saying, but that was mostly because the bottleneck never thought about anyone but himself." The illustration is quite *self-explanatory*!

In contrast to these depressing accounts, break open a New Testament, and see how this ego-centrism is challenged and replaced again and again by the kind of relationships that are modeled and mandated there.

Look back to the beginning of this study and read Philippians 4:1 again. These are the words of a man who is consummately skilled in relational theology, in other-centered living. And remember that the person who wrote these words is not to be regarded as an abnormal Christian, but as a normal one. The spirit seen in his words is the norm of Jesus and the New Testament. This paraphrase from The Message captures the idea: "Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you" (Matthew 5). Let the rule ring in your mind: *No one can experience true Christianity in isolation or insulation.* John Wesley said,

“There is no such thing as a solitary saint,” and he was right. Paul said that we “comprehend (only) *with all saints* what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge” (Ephesians 3:18). In the New Testament, true human maturity is a whole-souled commitment to the fullest promotion and fullest protection of every other person. Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” *The branch exists for ministry, to pass on the life of the vine in the form of fruit, so that others may be fed.* Theologian Anders Nygren once wrote, “There is no tree that bears fruit for its own use. The sun does not shine for itself. It is only man and the devil who in everything seek their own.” Bible teacher David Bosch echoed the same truth when he wrote, “Christianity that does not begin with the individual and his experience with God does not begin, but the Christianity which ends with the individual, ends.”

When I begin to explore this dimension in the New Testament, I find that there is no place to stop. The book is scintillatingly full of others, *others*, **others**, and we are privileged to breathe in its rarified air while living in the stifling vacuum of an egocentric society today. Our text remarkably reveals a disciple-maker’s relational skills.

## II. THE DISCIPLE-MAKER’S REVELATIONAL SKILLS

In Philippians 4:9, the other verse that heads this study, the Apostle Paul reveals *a disciple-maker’s revelational skills*. As revealed first in Jesus, and then in all other skilled disciple-makers, the “twin towers” of *revelation* and *relationships* are held in perfect balance. Revelation provides the truth that is to be propagated and perpetuated, and relationships secure the task force of propagators. Without the gigantic truths of Divine revelation, there will be no motive for building disciples and no substance with which to accomplish the task. But without qualitative and multiple relationships in the life of every believer, there will be no network of disciples. There will be few to *be* disciples and fewer still to *build* disciples.

Philippians 4:9 is another one of those breathlessly daring challenges of the Apostle Paul. “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” Have you ever heard another Christian leader, another disciple-maker, who was as bold as that? Paul sounds like a commanding officer leading his battalion into battle, and crying out, “I’ll lead, you follow!” But note that the emphasis is not on his aggressive action at this point, it is on the things he has taught the Philippians, his revelational message. Three of the verbs in this verse (“learn,” “receive,” “hear”) have to do with the personal communication and reception of truth. A fourth verb has to do with the vital incarnation of Christ and His truth in the life of the teacher (“those things which you have *seen in me*”). Paul seems to be straining at the leash of language to emphasize the importance of propositional or doctrinal communication, coupled with the incarnational presence of the doctrines in the life of the communicator. Then, he tags on the practical “tail to the kite”—now do what you have heard me teach and seen me exemplify.

Again, let’s put this other verse under the microscope of meditation. Let’s approach the verse from the standpoint of revelational or doctrinal communication. Here, Paul’s revelational skills are *suggested*; in his missionary ministry (primarily the Book of Acts, chapters 13-28) and his epistles, those skills are glaringly *seen*. Paul walked and talked consistently “the truth as it is in Christ.” Here we see the greatest Christian communicator writing of his Christian communication.

### **A. The Personal Communicator**

First, we can identify the *personal communicator* in this verse. The “me” in the verse is the greatest Christian teacher who has ever lived (discounting Jesus, of course, Who should not properly be called a “Christian”). A master-teacher has a gift from God which enables him to teach, but the gift will never be exploited to its maximum unless the teacher masters the academic discipline which he wants to teach. Paul had spent his entire life in learning, and when he fell by Divine Ambush under the spell of the Carpenter from Nazareth, the disciplines of study and learning took on an entirely new dimension to him. He reacted as if Jesus had spoken the words, “Learn of Me,” just to him. He spent the rest of his days exploring and expressing the truths of the Gospel of Christ.

### **B. The Propositional Communication**

Second, we can identify the *propositional communication* which he refers to in this verse. In a classic case of condensing much into few words, Paul refers to his teachings, the teachings of Christ and the Gospel, as simply “those things.” The term, “those things,” is a catch-all term which refers to two things: (1) The gigantic *personal incarnation* of Christ and His Gospel in the transparent life of the Apostle Paul; and (2) The gigantic *propositional information* which Paul imparted to explain all the implications of Christ and His Gospel. “Those things” require a lifetime of reflection today. The propositional content of “those things” is recorded systematically in Paul’s epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, practically in I and II Corinthians, devotionally in Ephesians and Colossians, relationally in Philippians and Philemon, supportively in Titus, I and II Thessalonians, and I and II Timothy. What an “off-the-map, out-of-this-world,” treasure trove is constituted by this body of Paul’s teachings! A disciple-maker will never lack curriculum if he spends his life studying and explaining Paul’s message. And this is to say nothing of the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and the other documents of the New Testament!

### **C. The Prospective Communicants**

Third, we can identify in this verse the *prospective communicants* who are to respond to Paul’s communication to them. Who are the “ye” in this verse? We glibly say, “Why, the Philippians, of course,” but as usual, we presume too much. It is significant to me that when the great devotional writer, Dr. F. B. Meyer, wrote his devotional commentary on the Apostle Paul, he included a chapter in *Paul’s* history entitled, “Ye Philippians.” There is little question that the Philippian church was the favorite church of those “born and raised” by Paul on his missionary journeys. The only possible rival to this position was the Thessalonian church. A casual reading of the Philippian letter will reveal that Paul deserved to be heard and followed by these Christian friends.

### **D. The Practical Conduct**



Fourth, we can identify in this verse the *practical conduct* that both God and Paul expected from these believers in Philippi. “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, *do*.” All of the disciple-making communication that had passed from Paul to the Philippians, all of the Christian counsel, all of the encouragement, had a totally practical purpose in mind. “Let all of you be *doers* of the word, and not hearers only.” “If you know these things, happy are you if you *do* them.” In the New Testament, the Christian life is far, far bigger than private belief, official public worship, and institutional support. One cannot say, “My faith is a personal and private matter,” and be a follower of Christ. One cannot reduce the Christian life to a one-, two-, or three-times-a-week function in church, and be a follower of Christ. One cannot spend his life merely supporting an institutional expression of the Body of Christ, and be a follower of Christ (again, if you doubt this, read the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and the epistles, where you will look in vain for a merely institutionalized formula for faith). Of course (*of course!*), every believer’s life is to be deeply centered in a local New Testament church, but the church is the *base* for his ministry, not the only *place* of it. Every purpose we hold, every plan we make, every possession we own, every thought we think, all are to be surrendered to Christ’s totalitarian control (“Lordship” means benevolent dictatorship) and all are to lead to practical expression for Christ’s sake. The New Testament word for this practical outcome is “fruit,” and the fruit of the New Testament is vast and various.

#### E. The Perpetual Consequence

Finally, we can identify in this verse the *perpetual consequence* that attends both the disciple and the disciple-maker when the process of disciple-making is properly engaged. “. . . . and the God of peace shall be with you,” Paul wrote. In verse seven of Philippians four, Paul had written of the sentinel of God’s peace “standing guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” This is the same idea as Colossians 3:15, which says, “And let the peace of God rule (the Greek word is the word from which we derive our word ‘umpire’) in your hearts.” Compare the phrases, “the peace of God,” and “the God of peace.” One simply cannot sustain the peace of God in his life without the reign of the God of peace over his heart. And Paul taught us how to gauge our Christian commitment by telling us to use God’s peace as the “umpire” or “referee” of our inner lives. If we truly have God’s peace, all the “calls” in our lives are going in favor of Jesus. If we are disturbed or distressed in any way, we are in some way saying, “Kill the ump!” and following our own rules. The peace of God is a terribly undervalued commodity in our society because so few have it and thus their only standard of evaluation is the tumultuous life of the “typical” hurried, harassed person. A man who was a proud and pleased owner of a certain well-known automobile said, “Even the worst storm doesn’t get in my engine!” And so, when God is with us and administratively in control of us, we can have unbroken peace.

Look at the verse again. “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, *do*.” Four of these verbs—“learned, received, heard, and seen”—are *aorist active indicative* verbs. Let me explain that. The *indicative mood* of these verbs means that they describe action that is to be real. The *active voice* of these verbs means that the subject is expected to act or has acted. These are not idle words; they are words of full expectation and real action. Then the *aorist tense* of these verbs indicates point action, or crisis commitment.

These verbs do not tolerate delay or postponement. The prescribed action is not casual, but rather critical and decisive.

The verb, “do,” on the other hand (“do these things”), is a *present active imperative* verb. The *imperative mood* means that this word is a command, a command of equal force to any of the Ten Commandments, or any command God has ever given to man. The *active voice* again means that real action is required in obedience to what has been learned, received, and heard from Paul and seen in his life. And the *present tense* means that these things are to be true in my life at this very moment and in each continuing moment of my life. What giant words these are! What an incredible chart for Christian living is here! What a picture of a disciple-maker and his disciples is contained in this verse!

Linger a moment longer over the mechanics of the verse. The last two verbs, “heard” and “saw,” refer to *Paul’s personal contact with the Philippians*. He had been with them, at which time they “heard” him teach and preach the Gospel and all of its related truths, and “saw in him” the true example of his teachings. Here is a vital clue in making disciples. The degree of impact you will have on any individual will usually be in exact ratio to the amount of time you spend in personal contact with him. Furthermore, the integrity of that personal contact with a disciple or disciples will be determined by two things: the character of your life and the quality of your teaching. The two verbs, “learned” and “received,” picture *the Philippians’ reception of Paul’s ongoing teaching* and instructing while he was with them, and perhaps to the continuing instruction they have received by means of the letter they are now reading.

Now let me summarize this involved verse in a succession of sentences. (1) Paul says, You saw “these things,” the whole Gospel and its teaching, modeled in me. You see, God often transforms me (or you) by the sight of the authentic Christ in someone else. Indeed, this is the way Gospel impact normally begins in human experience. (2) You heard me present (proclaim through preaching and teaching) these things. Successful testimony is given when the life and the lips are united and unanimous in their presentation, and *when they both agree with the Lord!*. You see, God often transmits the truth to me (or you) through someone else. (3) You received these things from me, Paul says. The word “received” is the normal word for reception after personal communication, and it implies total involvement of the recipient with the thing received. So an identification and union are established between a believer and the Gospel he has received. God absolutely *transforms* the one who embraces (“hears” and “learns”) these things. (4) You truly “learned” them, Paul says, not merely academically, but in character and conduct. A *vital transfer* has occurred, and an even more *vital transformation* has been wrought in your life. (5) Now you must be extremely careful to “do these things.” God wants to see these things you have “learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me” translated into productive action. What action is required? *The same action which has been done by a disciple-maker to you, you are now to do to your own disciples*. So here is the fulfilment of Christ’s command to “turn people into disciples” capsuled in a single verse; better, captured in the single still frame of a disciple-maker’s life.

The process has been summarized under five “M’s”: Modeling, Mentoring, Monitoring, Mobilizing, and Multiplying. I heard about a simpleton who worked at an “M and M” factory, but they fired him because he kept throwing the “W’s” away! Encyclopedic volumes could be written on the New Testament manifestation of each of these “M” words. Our verse entails at

least the first four of these five words, and the process is thus set in motion which will guarantee the “multiplying” phase. Memorize this verse, and let it be the motto of your life. See yourself implementing the receptive parts as your discipler communicates with you, then see yourself implementing the communicative parts as you work with the disciple or disciples God has given you.

Christians are not just *patients*, or *clients*, or *customers*, or *solicitors*, or *patrons*, or *auditors*; they are **disciples**. And their discipleship is standardized *by Jesus*, not by their dedication, or desires, or limits. The terms of their discipleship are proscribed by Jesus, not prescribed by personal opinion, by any other Christian or by any group of Christians. So Jesus associated His twelve closely with Himself and this association was the heart and soul of their discipleship and learning. By this means, He established the movement that revolutionized the Roman world. The same strategy would create a revolution again if properly implemented by His followers today.

I live in a home which has a six-lane street behind it. Fortunately, we are buffered by a metal and a wooden fence so that we are not *buffeted* by the sights and sounds of traffic on this wide street. Because of my schedule of east-west travel to distant places of the earth, I have perennial jet-lag. As a result, I am up very early each morning. I drink my cup of coffee while swinging in the patio swing at the rear of the house. During this brief early morning time, I and Jesus casually re-acquaint ourselves and prepare for our “briefing time” together. I was seated on the patio swing early one morning when the traffic on the big street dramatically increased because of an early morning work shift. The street has a corridor of trees on either side in some spots near my home, and I noticed that when a *car* passed down the traffic lane nearest the trees, they didn’t even stir. But when a big *truck* came by at significant speed, those trees churned as though they had been blown by a strong wind. Question: How big is your Christian character? Is it big enough to stir those around you? Question: How commanding is your Christian commitment—to you, and to those around you? Is your commitment Christ-customized, or is it determined by tradition? Are you truly His disciple on His terms? If you are, it is inevitable that you *will* make disciples, and they will be made by specific intent and strategy. Question: Where are you going, and how far? Question: What (whom) are you transporting? Question: Is the vortex of your “run” dislodging others and carrying them with you? If not, be kind enough to yourself to go back to questions one and two, ask God to make them big enough to challenge you, then ask Him to resolve them correctly.

So when the final curtain is drawn over your life, will it have more closely followed the pattern of Paganini or Patti? Tradition or truth? The well-intentioned views of Christians, or the command of Christ?

I pray that the stimulus of this study will lead you to linger over Philippians 4:9 for the rest of your life, memorize it, and ask God to incarnate it in you and your disciples.

### **An Addendum**

Relational living requires lingering to *discover, to be aware of*, other people. At a small gathering, one pupil from a large class said to another guest, “You remind me of our teacher.” The other person politely replied, “I *am* your teacher.” Of course, there were moments of embarrassment and apology. The student mumbled weakly, “I sit at the back and can’t see you.” *There is a difference between faces meeting and persons meeting.* (Source unknown)

All the skills and education in the world will never impress anyone as much as genuine, heartfelt care for them. Plus, few things have a more positive effect on others than finding out and remembering things about them. Knowing a lot about people is a real display of your care for them, and it creates a lasting bond.

People who focus on themselves when interacting with others rarely build positive lasting relationships. All they do is create frustration for themselves and boredom for the other person. Instead, become a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves. And be perceptive

—  
when in another’s home or office, observe your surroundings. You can discover quite a bit about someone’s hobbies and interests by looking at pictures on the walls, trophies, books or mementos. Ask questions about what you see, and pay attention to the answers.

In spite of our human desire for large-scale influence, we really make an impact on people *one at a time*. And we can miss some important opportunities to connect if we dismiss or overlook people we meet every day. Meet others with anticipation, and expect *every* encounter to yield positive results. It costs little to make another person feel important and respected, but it does wonderful things for him or her. Value everyone, and you will never be guilty of underestimating anyone. (John Maxwell)

Remember, our Best Friend said, “He who would have friends must show himself friendly.”

We must learn to look at others (“outsiders”) as prospective friends and possible future fellow Christians. (Source unknown)