

"Discipling Grace-filled Ambassadors"

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, place within us the confidence and boldness to proclaim the Good News to those around us in all places and at all times. Help us to be Your ambassadors in all that we say and what we do. We ask for a special blessing on this study. Amen.

Theme verses: *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

Introduction

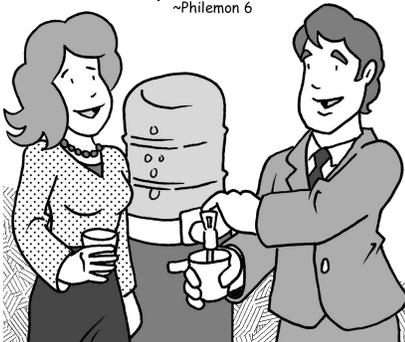
Of the words in the title of this study, perhaps the word "ambassador" is the at least in a religious sense. In the ESV Bible translation, it is used only in 2 Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20. We will begin this study by defining the words "ambassador," discipling, and grace.

Ambassador: *the highest-ranking diplomatic representative of one country to another (Webster's New World Dictionary).* An ambassador of the United States is a very prestigious position. This person speaks for our country. The honor of a country is in their hands. The words of the ambassador are listened to and the actions are watched. The responsibility of an ambassador is to represent his/her country in a very honorable way.



As ambassadors for Jesus, we represent Him and speak on His behalf. We bring Jesus' message to the world. As important as it is to be an ambassador who represents a country, it is a much greater privilege and a much more significant responsibility. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20a).* Just as Jesus sent Paul to be an ambassador, He is sending us. As ambassadors for Jesus, we share the Gospel with whomever God places in our paths.

"Be active in sharing
your faith."
~Philemon 6



Disciple: **follower** who accepts and assists in spreading the beliefs and values of another. As Jesus' disciples, we trust and believe in His teachings, and we assist in the spreading of the Good News of Jesus. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in their relationship with Jesus and are equipped by the Holy Spirit to share the life-saving Gospel with others. A disciple is also a **learner** who spends time learning and growing in faith by spending time reading and studying God's Word, praying, attending worship services, and participating in the Lord's Supper. A faithful individual who leads people to Jesus.

Discipling is the process we undertake to help and equip the disciple to go about spreading the Good News. The pastors and leaders of each church should be intentional about equipping disciples for ministry.

Grace: *the love and favor of God toward man (Webster's New World Dictionary).* Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is unmerited, unearned, and undeserved. Grace is not ours to earn; it is God's to give. As the Apostle Paul wrote, *"What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).* As Christians, we understand that

all we are and have are by God's grace. God lavishes us with His grace. Each day we celebrate the gift of life. We bask in the beauty of God's creation. We receive blessing after blessing from our wonderful, giving, and gracious God.

The zenith of God's grace is the gift of His Son, Jesus, who gives us the gift of grace. The acronym for grace so aptly states, we have "**G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense." Even though we are sinful and undeserving, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross, and we are given eternal salvation. God was not bound by necessity to give salvation. It is the result of God's gracious gift. Many mistakenly strive to earn this gift, but none of us is capable of doing so.

God's grace gives us both the desire and the power to do His will. Rev. James of Truth Works Ministry, wrote, "Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling you to be who He created to do what He has called you to do."

1. What does it mean to be an ambassador?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said that you must "deny [yourself] and take up [your] cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24-26).
3. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19). Who is He telling to go? Is there evidence in your life that you are taking this command seriously?

Witnessing for Jesus

Prior to Jesus' ascension, He told His disciples, "...you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Filled with the Holy Spirit and His power, the disciples began the task that every generation of Christians since then has continued. We witness for Jesus wherever we are, certainly not just in worship or "doing church work," but sharing His Gospel with all we meet so all will come to know Him as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

As witnesses for Jesus, we have many opportunities to tell others of the greatest miracle that has ever occurred. The Son of God condescended to come to earth to live as one of us, to be humiliated for the sake of those He loves, to be forsaken by His Father as He became sin for us on the cross, and then to rise victoriously. This miracle is one to be shouted from the housetops, for it is meant not just for you and me, but for all humankind. That's what the "Therefore" in the Great Commission means. Christ has died for our sins and risen again so that we might live forever with Him (Matthew 28:18-20). He has authority to issue this command. "THEREFORE GO!" Don't keep this miracle a secret. Take time to tell it to your neighbors and friends. Use your talents to build up your church so that its mission and ministry might be enhanced. Spend your resources so that others (if not you yourself) are enabled to be His witnesses to "all nations."

God's plan for His people has always been that we take responsibility for sharing the Good News. Peter wrote, "Always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). God blesses us with minds to learn and mouths to speak. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God will give us the words and the courage to use them. Along with most people, we are eager to talk about the weather, sports, economy, or politics, but, as Christians, we have been given the treasure of the Gospel message—something vastly more important to talk about. Our attitude should be like that of Peter and John, who,

when commanded to stop and provide aid, *"We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).

Like kids bragging about their dads, we can talk about our wonderful, almighty, loving Father, who, while we were still sinners, sent us a Savior to redeem us from our slavery to sin (Romans 5:8). Through Christ, we know the Father. Through Christ, the Father has come to us. Through Christ, we have life everlasting in Heaven. This is the Good News that we grace-filled ambassadors want to share. May God give us courage to use the opportunities He gives us.

4. You are not to be speechless when called upon to defend your faith (1 Peter 3:15). How can you be prepared?
5. What does it mean to be a letter for Christ? (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)
6. What are you directed to do? (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)
7. In Mark 5, Jesus heals a man possessed by a demon. Read Mark 5:19-20. How does the healed man act as a disciple? Read Mark 7:31-32. What gives evidence that the man obeyed Jesus' command to proclaim the Gospel?
8. What made the Apostle Paul such a great ambassador? (John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 12:9)
9. How can you, by witnessing, come to a deeper understanding of *"every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ?"* (Philemon 6)
10. Jesus wants to you to be His hands, feet, and lips to bring the Gospel to those who call on Him as their Savior. How can you be more intentional in your witnessing?
11. How is your church doing in equipping you as ambassadors and witnesses? What kind of training would be helpful to you?

Prayer

Dear Lord, continue to change and transform our hearts so we will seek to honor You and share Your love with all people. Use us as Your instruments of love, grace, and peace. In Jesus' name, amen.