

# Insights

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

The Way to a New Life

JULY / AUGUST 2012



part  
two

## What kind of disciple are you?

Go deeper  
as a follower of Jesus:  
learn the 6 levels of discipleship.



— Reclaim your freedom





# What kind of disciple are you?



part  
two

# Follow Him.

BY DENNIS BURKE

**W**hat makes the difference between the casual saint and the committed disciple in the Body of Christ? We can find answers by looking at those who followed Jesus when He walked on this earth. Last issue we looked briefly at four of the six possible levels in our relationship with God: *salvation, spiritual hunger, servant, and partnership*. This time we'll look at the last two and highest levels: *dedication and intimacy with God*. It benefits us to look closely at these six different categories of Jesus' followers so we can locate our own commitment level in our pursuit of God's call upon our lives.

## **Level 5** Dedication (disciples who leave all to follow Jesus)

If you study the Gospels, you'll find that Jesus sometimes brought Peter, James, and John into situations separate from the rest of the 12 disciples or gave them special assignments. For example, when Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, came to Jesus to ask Him to heal his daughter, Jesus and His disciples accompanied Jairus back to his home. But when they arrived at their destination, Jesus wanted only Peter, James, and John to come in with Him as He brought God's healing power to Jairus' daughter.

Another example of a time when Jesus asked His closest three disciples to come away with Him was the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). The rest of the 12 disciples weren't present when Moses and Elijah appeared with

"Jesus required a special level of consecration or gave special assignments to the disciples who were closest to Him."

Jesus on the mountain. Only Peter, James, and John were there to see that amazing sight. These are just two instances of events for which Jesus required a special level of consecration or gave special assignments to the disciples who were closest to Him.

God has given each of us different positions in the Body of Christ. While some have the assignment as outlined in Ephesians 4:11—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher, there are assignments for every person that are just as important to God's plans. But regardless of what position we fill in God's Kingdom, we are required to continually pursue more and more of the high calling He has given to us. God expects a high level of consecration and commitment from us and gives us special assignments that are all vital.

In Romans 12:6-8 is another list of callings or assignments God distributes to people:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation;

he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

We may be used to encourage, give, minister faith or provide leadership to someone. It will take a new kind of dedication and diligence to follow the details of His plan. The life of the disciple will follow closely to His leading.



## Level 6 Deep Intimacy with God (discipleship on the highest level)

Among Jesus' 12 disciples, the Apostle John is the one who presents a clear picture of the highest level of discipleship. John is called the apostle of love. In both his Gospel and his epistles, John talks more about the love of God than any of the other 12 disciples who wrote books of the New Testament. Only the Apostle Paul wrote on the same level, revealing God's love in deeper and clearer ways.

One of the best ways to identify the nature of John's relationship with Jesus is to see how John referred to himself in his own Gospel. Five different times, he referred to himself as "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). That is an amazing way to refer to oneself! It can even sound a little arrogant to a reader if he misinterprets what John was saying.

For instance, John 13:23 says, "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." John wasn't saying that Jesus loved him more than He loved anyone else. God is love, and He loves every one of us with a perfect love. That will never change.

So what is the variable that does change? It is this: How much someone knows of God's love.

Of all Jesus' disciples, John had the greatest revelation that he was loved by the Master. This revelation positioned John to experience an intimate relationship with Jesus. The closeness between Jesus and John was so profound that when Jesus

hung on the Cross, He gave this disciple whom He loved the responsibility of taking care of His own mother—the most intimate of all assignments.

When John got hold of this revelation that he was loved by Jesus, it became one of the primary ways he identified himself. John saw himself as the one whom Jesus loved, and this identity was more important to him than his own name!

Nothing gets one's attention more quickly than one's own name. Yet John started to replace his own name with the revelation that he was the one whom Jesus loved. It became the way John identified himself.

The New Covenant commands us to know that we are loved. For instance, First John 4:16 tells us that we must believe in the love God has for us. The revelation

**"John saw himself as the one whom Jesus loved, and this identity was more important to him than his own name!"**

of being loved is the only thing that will empower us to walk in love. We can't walk in that which is not yet a revelation in our own hearts. Therefore, to the degree we're learning and receiving God's love for us, to that degree we're able to actually express that divine love to others.

You will never truly understand how to love another with unconditional love until you know that you are loved unconditionally. What does it mean to be loved unconditionally? It means you don't have to qualify for that love. You're not required to perform in order to receive from God.

Most Christians—and certainly those who are not Christians—are conditional in the love they give to others. They have expectations regarding how the recipient should respond when they give their love.

That's why it can be so difficult for us to comprehend the love of God. It's just so different from the human love we have experienced with people. We not only have to discover that we are loved by God—we





must also learn how to show that same unconditional love to other people.

## We can give without loving, but we can't love without giving

Love always gives. God gave His love to us first, not because He knew that our love would come back to Him. God doesn't give just to receive back—He gives because He is love, and *love gives*. God gave first, and He never stops giving. He keeps giving because He is love, and giving is what love does.

Of course, God also expected to receive. The law of His Kingdom is clear: When you sow, you *will* reap a harvest. Yet love that gives first doesn't require a like response in order to be fulfilled. The act of giving love is in itself fulfilling.

The more we grow in our life with God, the more we are able to love in the same unconditional way *He* loves. This will impact our faith because faith works by love (Galatians 5:6). Faith doesn't work without this kind of mindset.

It is designed to work with love as its root.

The Apostle John believed the love God had for him. John died as an old man—the only original apostle of Jesus to live out his life. Whereas all the other 11 apostles of Jesus were martyred, John was exiled to a life of hard labor on the Isle of Patmos. There he wrote the Book of Revelation. Later he was released from Patmos and lived out his life in Ephesus. The Bishop of the Church of Ephesus in 190 AD writes of the Apostle John who “fell asleep at Ephesus.”

This great apostle of love made the simple and sustaining discovery of living

“When you sow, you will reap a harvest. Yet love that gives first doesn't require a like response in order to be fulfilled. The act of giving love is in itself fulfilling.”

life as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” You can discover this same life-changing truth. Determine to grow up in the knowledge of the God-kind of love. Allow your spiritual

foundation to be built on the same truth this old apostle discovered back when he was a young disciple of the Messiah—that you, too, are a disciple whom Jesus loves.

## Locating ourselves in the six levels of discipleship

Each of us can find ourselves somewhere in these six levels of discipleship. Of course, as we grow in our walk with God toward higher levels, we should continue to grow in our revelation of each level of discipleship that comes before. We must keep growing in our revelation of salvation, in our spiritual hunger, in our willingness to serve God, and in our partnership with the Lord. We should never allow ourselves to become stagnant in any of these qualities that define a disciple of Jesus.

Then as we grow in these qualities, we will also be brought into a much more intimate walk with Jesus so that, ultimately, we can reveal through our lives what God's love looks like as it is demonstrated in this world. God help us all to grow in the giving of this divine love, for God's love in action is the goal toward which all other revelation points. It is the revelation that defines the nature of grace and that explains the gifts of the Holy Spirit—gifts that are themselves manifestations of God's love in action.

The more we meditate on the royal law James talked about—the law of love—the more we will come to identify ourselves as the ones whom Jesus loves. At that point, we can begin to love others unconditionally rather than with a carnal, selfish love.

Those who are of the world know only how to love as long as they are loved in return. They give only as long as they receive. Sadly, many in the Body of Christ think the same way.

But God is in the process of rooting out all traces of carnal, fleshly love in our lives. His goal is to bring us into an intimate life of discipleship where we are free to love others—just as deeply and passionately as He loves *us*.

*Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures are taken from the New King James Version.*

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# SINGING TO THE WALL

BY VIKKI BURKE

IT'S AMAZING HOW EARLY WE LOSE OUR FREEDOM, HOW YOUNG WE ARE WHEN THE DEVIL STARTS TO STEAL IT. HE DOESN'T WAIT FOR US TO REACH THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. HE FIRST SLIPS HIS PICKPOCKETING HAND INTO HUMAN HEARTS IN THE TENDER YEARS OF INNOCENCE.



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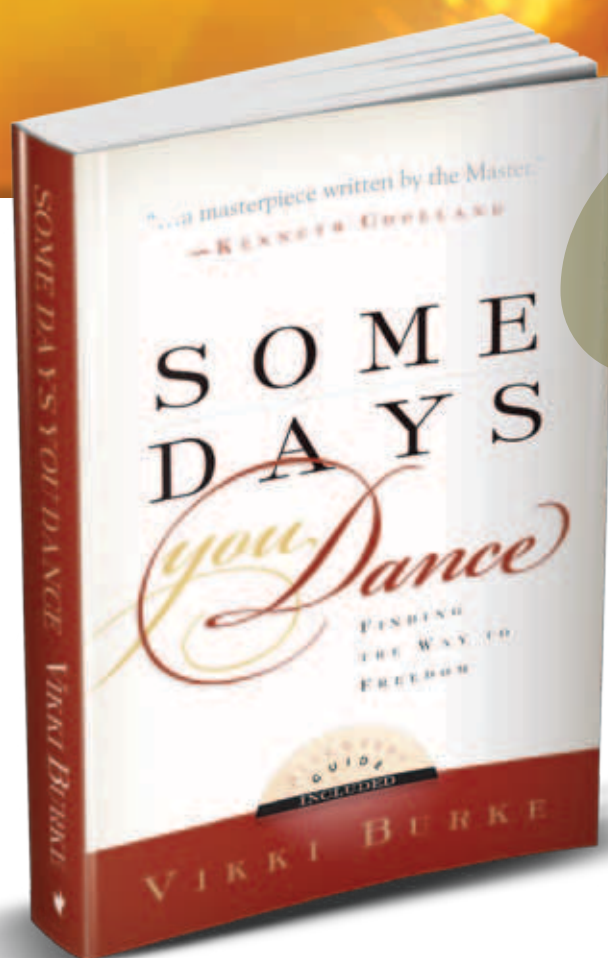
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Such are the normal experiences of life. We all have them. We take them so much for granted as they pile up year after year that we don't realize how they're changing us: How, with each rejection or humiliation, we withdraw a little more to protect ourselves. How, with each failure or criticism, we become a little less adventurous, a little less alive, a little less free to be ourselves.

For some people the process is gentle and gradual. For others it's rough and rapid. When you grow up like I did, surrounded by the seriously wounded, your liberty is stripped in more dramatic ways. Instead of slipping in as a pickpocket, the devil barrels in and robs you at gunpoint. (In my particular case, that's more literal than figurative.)

But here's the thing. Nobody completely escapes the devil's sticky fingers. Even in the most healthy, loving families, "the thief comes—to steal, and kill, and destroy," (John 10:10 *NASB*); and try as we may to protect ourselves and our children from him, he always does some damage.

In the initial stages, his handiwork is almost invisible. It takes a sharp eye to see it. But if you know what to look for, the evidence is there. A friend of mine spotted it recently in her own family during the annual celebration when her relatives get together for the holidays. My friend asked

her oldest granddaughter, a chirpy 11 year-old who's always loved to sing, to entertain the group with a tune.

The year before, the girl had serenaded the same bunch with uninhibited glee. But this time it was different. A tinge of scarlet spread across her fair, freckled face. She hung her head as if guilty of some minor crime and said, "No."

"But we all want to hear you!" her mother pleaded.

Eyes fixed on the carpet, the girl shook her blonde head. Every adult in the room understood what she was feeling. She was afraid of making a mistake and looking the fool. She'd grown up some since last year, watched enough music videos and episodes of *American Idol* to be embarrassed about

her vocal imperfections. The family thought she was wonderful, but she was no longer sure of it herself. So she decided to play it safe. She hid her inadequacies by refusing to sing.

Everyone accepted her decision with good humor and went back to football and pumpkin pie. Her grandmother, however, was less easily dissuaded. After extensive wheedling, she convinced her granddaughter to grant

her a private performance in another room. But even there, standing in front of the one person in the world in whose eyes she could do no wrong, she couldn't relax. So she turned her back toward her grandmother, faced the other way, and sang in a timid voice—looking at the wall.

As she was singing, another admirer joined the audience—my friend's younger granddaughter, a wide-eyed three-year old. She listened to her older cousin, breathless with admiration, and when the song was over, clapped her dimpled hands. "My turn!" she cried.

Rushing to stand beside her cousin, the toddler tried to follow her example by

"...WITH EACH REJECTION OR HUMILIATION, WE WITHDRAW A LITTLE MORE TO PROTECT OURSELVES. ...WITH EACH FAILURE OR CRITICISM, WE BECOME A LITTLE LESS ADVENTUROUS, A LITTLE LESS ALIVE, A LITTLE LESS FREE TO BE OURSELVES."

dennis & vikki burke



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VIKKI  
(LADIES MEETING)





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turning away from her grandmother and singing to the wall. But she couldn't do it. Her joy overcame her. The more she sang, belting out a tune that she made up as she went along, the more exuberant she became. Waving her arms, she whirled and giggled and called out between choruses, "Watch my moves, Grandma! Watch my moves!"

A few of the adults in the other room heard the ruckus and filtered in to enjoy the show. None of them could remember what it felt like to be that free. To feel so unconditionally loved. So perfectly accepted. So delighted with themselves and everybody else.

Like the rest of us, they all lost that kind of freedom long ago. So long ago that they don't even notice it's gone.

But what if it was possible for us to regain that kind of freedom?

What if we could grow back into our lost liberty the same way we grew out of it not all at once in the kind of magic wand moment you find in fairy tales but a little at a time—day by day, month by month, and year by year? What if Someone came along who could undo the damage that's been done to our heart, restore what the devil has stolen, and set us free? Totally free.

Like we were in the beginning....



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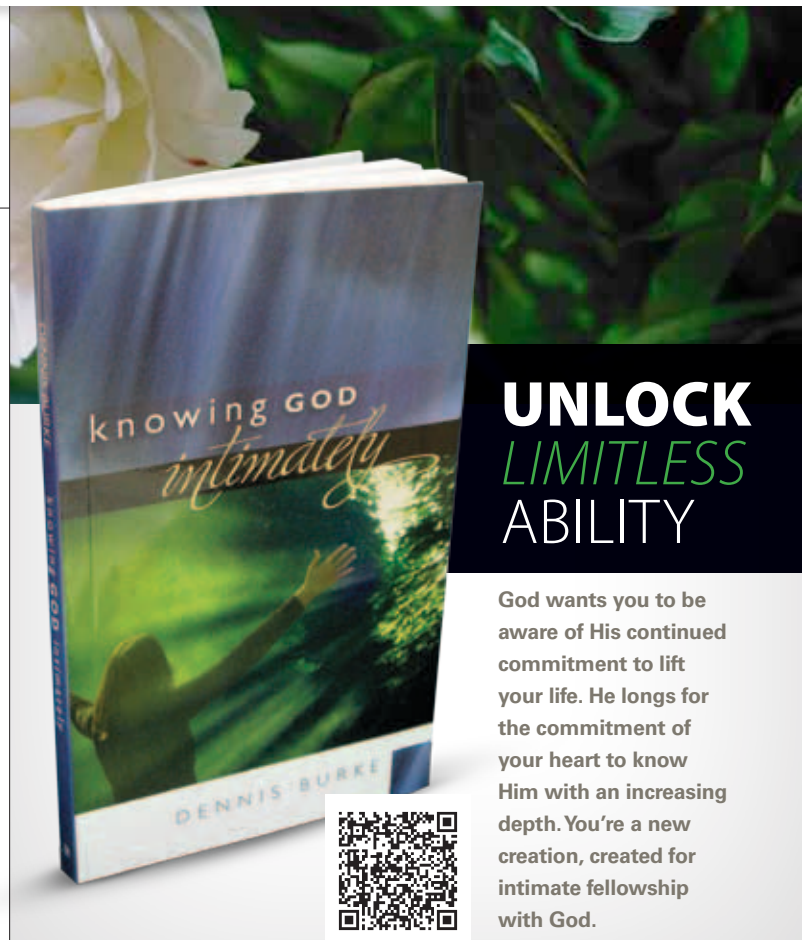


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