

# DISCIPLING THE HARDENED ABUSED OR ESTRANGED

## Part I: Adjusting Ourselves Before Discipling

(Matthew 4:19 et al.)

### I. Introduction

- A. Recently, several believers have shared their concerns about discipling hardened abused or estranged people.
- B. We thus give five lessons on discipling such people, with this lesson on adjusting ourselves before discipling:

### II. Adjusting Ourselves Before Discipling, Matthew 4:19 et al.

- A. We need to understand the spiritual state of hardened abused or estranged people before we disciple them:
  - 1. Hardened abused or estranged people function by their sin natures:
    - a. The product of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV), qualities not expressed by hardened abused or estranged people.
    - b. Since the Holy Spirit and one's sin nature are contrary to one another (Galatians 5:17), hardened abused or estranged people function by their sin natures. They are thus theologically said to be "carnal."
  - 2. Carnal people do not discern spiritual truth, for it is foolishness to them, nor are they able to discern it because it is spiritually discerned by the Holy Spirit's ministry to upright believers, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15.
  - 3. Carnal people are either unsaved or saved people, but both are ungodly (1 Corinthians 3:1-2 with 1:1-2).
  - 4. If a hardened abused or estranged person is unsaved, we must understand his spiritual state (as follows):
    - a. The unsaved person is blinded by Satan to the salvation Gospel of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.
    - b. The unsaved person is a spiritual child of Satan, and the works of his father Satan he will do, John 8:44.
    - c. Since he has not believed the Gospel of Christ to be saved, his hardened state is a defense mechanism set up to guard himself as he lacks faith in God's goodness, ability or will to protect him from harm.
    - d. Such a person obviously needs to be saved and thus to have a big, wholesome, Biblical view of God.
  - 5. If a hardened abused or estranged person is saved but carnal, we must understand his spiritual state:
    - a. A carnal believer is hardened as a defense mechanism in an effort to protect himself from people whom he believes are harmful, meaning he lacks sufficient faith in God's goodness, ability or will to protect him.
    - b. Thus, a hardened abused or estranged believer eventually needs to have a better, Biblical view of God.
    - c. A carnal believer needs to confess his sin of functioning in his sin nature by applying 1 John 1:9.
    - d. The forgiven believer then needs to rely on the Holy Spirit to boycott living by his sin nature, Gal. 5:16.
  - 6. A hardened abused or estranged carnal believer or unsaved person has free will and can decide never to respond positively to discipling (Hebrews 6:4-6 re: carnal believers; Matthew 12:30-32 re: unbelievers).
- B. We thus need to know how to adjust ourselves to be used of God to help hardened abused or estranged people:
  - 1. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus told His disciples to follow Him, and He would make them to be fishers of men, namely, disciplers of people. For believers in the Church era, this call involves the following actions:
    - a. We must rely by faith on the Holy Spirit for godly living and effective Christian service, Gal. 5:16-17.
    - b. We must function in God's will, what involves using the spiritual gift God gave us, 1 Peter 4:10. In other words, for us to be effective in ministering to hardened abused or estranged people, we will need to use the supernatural spiritual gift God gave us for ministry. For this reason, God may need to use other believers who are gifted with other spiritual gifts besides our gift to complete the discipling of the hardened person.
    - c. We need to have a working knowledge of Scripture to be equipped to disciple, 2 Timothy 3:15-17. The more we know of God's Word, the better equipped we will be to be used of the Lord to disciple others.
    - d. We need to practice intercessory prayer for effective discipling results, James 5:16b-18; John 14:16-17.
  - 2. In practice, when relating to hardened abused or estranged people, we must focus on Christ's Matthew 4:19 call to "follow" Him – not to push or try to manipulate hardened people! Just as Paul in Colossians 4:3-4 asked believers to pray for him to have opportunities to witness and to have the words to speak when witnessing to the unsaved, we must rely on God in every part of our interactions with troubled people.
  - 3. We must realize that our efforts may not result in success, for hardened abused or estranged people have free will. Just as some people rejected Christ's ministry (Matthew 11:21-24), some will reject our efforts.
  - 4. Such hardened people may exhibit behavior that signals Satanic influence as noted in 2 Timothy 2:24-3:5a, 6-9. If so, we must withdraw from them to the degree needed for our spiritual protection, 2 Timothy 3:5b.

**Lesson:** *Before discipling abused or estranged people, we must rely on the Holy Spirit and get to know Scripture.*

**Application:** *May we rely on God and get to know Scripture before discipling abused or estranged people.*