

Discipling on Church Street: The Lukan Saviour, His First Disciples and Discipleship in a Modern Irish Context.

Abstract

Most church leaders agree that understanding discipleship is central to understanding what it means to live out a life of faith. However, definitions of what it means to be a disciple vary. In order to explore what discipleship actually entails, we must begin with the scriptures, our source documents. The writings of St Luke in his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, provide an excellent insight into the lives of the first disciples. These documents form the source materials for this study on discipleship.

However, we cannot consider the disciples without first looking to the Master and it is with Jesus that this paper begins. St Luke is clear that Jesus is the Saviour who has come to carry out God's salvific plan. It is in a Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16-27) that Jesus announces this salvific work and characterises it as a jubilee task. The Saviour's words and deeds which are set out in the rest of the Gospel and at the start of Acts are understood in the context of this pericope. In the Book of Acts, the disciple is one who is continuing Jesus' jubilee mission under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Through informal interviews with a wide range of church leaders within the Belfast context, this dissertation seeks to understand how discipleship is understood today and compare this with discipleship as it is set out in Luke/Acts. While verbal proclamation is agreed as a key discipleship task, there are significant differences in viewpoint over the full extent of Lukan discipleship, particularly with reference to service and sacrifice.