



A Spirit-Empowered Disciple

This article is from *Cry Out to the Lord*. It is an excerpt from the book *A Spirit-Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model* by **Alton Garrison** of the Billy Graham Evangelism Association.

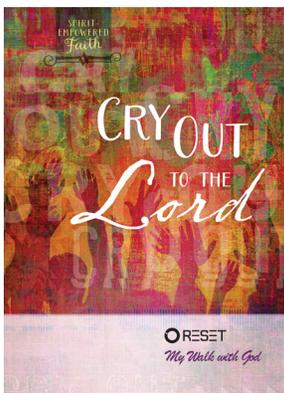
A Spirit-empowered disciple is one who both demonstrates the Great Commandment of loving God and loving people and then is empowered to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples. We know this kind of disciple will never be possible without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit moves, we'll see a disciple who not only knows the Word but lives it. We'll see a disciple who has fresh, frequent encounters with Jesus, not just a one-time salvation experience. When the Spirit moves upon the heart of this disciple, they will have a lifestyle of engaging with others in true, vulnerable fellowship. Fulfilling the Great Commission is a natural outpouring for the Spirit-empowered disciple.

Our mission, which we call the Great Commission, was established with Christ's words on the Mount of Ascension: *"Therefore go and make disciples..."* (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV). The Great Commission focuses on the belief system Christ taught, and it establishes the purpose for the church's existence. We are commissioned to worship the Lord with all we have, to win the lost, to train believers to become disciples, to use our ministry gifts, and to find environments of fellowship for connection.

What we often call the Great Commandment serves as a guide for our beliefs—our attitudes and actions—how we go about this Great Commission. Jesus spelled out the Great Commandment, and love was front and center: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"* (Matthew 22:37–39 NIV).

In the light of our mission to make disciples, we can sometimes neglect that love is the guiding force that should govern how we pursue our mission. Paul admonishes us that without love, evidence of Spirit empowerment is hollow and nothing but a clanging cymbal, profiting us nothing. It's as vital to have love guiding our mission as it is to have the Holy Spirit empowering us to complete it.

Our mission is clear. Love is our guide, but what will it look like to make disciples through the lens of love?



Click here to order
Cry Out to the Lord



The Lifestyle of Discipleship

Spirit-empowered discipleship first requires a lifestyle of fresh encounters with Jesus. We must never get too busy working for Him that we lose our relationship with Him. Paul said, *"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8 NASB). What kind of encounters with Jesus will mark the Spirit-empowered disciple? Here are just a few: Jesus longs for our praise—praise from those He has blessed, healed, comforted, and encouraged. Therefore one way to relate to Jesus is to reflect on His divine gifts and then give Him praise. He is always comforting, always blessing, always encouraging, and always healing, but are we careful to give Him praise? Picture Him uttering these words: *"Where are the (other) nine?"* (Luke 17:17 ESV).

Another way to have a productive encounter with Jesus is to be attentive to His voice—listen to Him. Many times we think that to love Jesus and relate to Him means that we get busy doing things for Him. Jesus is actually longing for us to do just what Mary did—give Him our undivided, focused attention. Luke wrote, *"Mary...sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching"* (Luke 10:39 ESV). If we get quiet, we'll hear Him speak.



- L1. Practicing thanksgiving in all things

LEARN to Encounter Jesus

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings....(Philippians 3:10, NASB)

Reflect on the passage mentioned above. Luke 17 describes a painful scene in the life of Jesus. Ten lepers had thrown themselves at the mercy of the Savior and begged Him for healing. Jesus graciously healed each of the 10 men, restoring their bodies and restoring them to their families and their place in the community. But despite this miraculous event, only one of them returned to give Him thanks.

Imagine Jesus, standing on the dusty road, one former leper has bowed before Him to give thanks, and He says, *"Where are the (other) nine"* (Luke 17:17, ESV)? What does it do to your heart to imagine Christ's disappointment? How does it make you feel to know that the Savior gave these men life, health, restoration, and blessing, and yet only one returned with a grateful heart? Tell Jesus how your heart responds to this incident. Encounter Him; relate to Him because of your love for Him.

Jesus, You would have understandably experienced disappointment and sadness when only one of those men returned to say thanks. It makes my heart sad to know that _____.

Jesus, when I reflect on how You gave the 10 men so much, and yet they weren't all grateful, I hurt for You because _____.

I don't want to be like the nine lepers who didn't give You thanks. I want to be like the one who returned and thanked You. So please hear my gratitude. Lord, I am grateful today for how You have given me _____.



Secondly, to be a Spirit-empowered disciple, we need frequent experiences of scriptures. We can't give what we haven't received. If we love God, we'll love His Word. It's good to know doctrine and even to memorize the Bible, but it's more important to practice the Scripture daily. That should be our goal. Peter teaches us, *"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart"* (1 Peter 1:22 NASB). Are we practicing that daily? We can practice it by rejoicing with a friend when they have received a great blessing, by comforting a person in their sorrow, or by weeping *"with those who weep"* (Romans 12:15). This is *"doing the Book!"*

Anyone who applies the Bible this way is achieving a Spirit-empowered outcome: *"Being a living epistle in reverence and awe as His Word becomes real in my life."*



- P3. Discerning relational needs (appreciation) of others with a heart to give of His love.

PRAY and Experience Scripture

"Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Reflect for a moment on the people around you who have recently experienced a positive event in their lives. Is there someone who's recently had a baby, completed a project, found a job, or completed a class? This person is feeling happy. Romans 12:15 tells us that when others are feeling happy, they need us to join them and express our happiness with them.

Here's what expressing happiness might sound like:

- *"I am so glad that you _____."*
- *"I am delighted to hear about your _____."*
- *"I'm excited for you _____."*
- *"It made me smile to know that you _____."*

Choose one person who could benefit from your celebration and then plan to *"experience Scripture"* and do the Book. Celebrate with this person in a note, text, e-mail, or in person.

Finally, a Spirit-empowered lifestyle requires faithful engagement with God's people. We must see people as God sees them or we will never love them as He loves them. We must see people as both fallen and alone. They have spiritual needs as well as relational needs.

My friend, Dr. Ferguson, pointed something out in Scripture that I had never seen before—aleness actually came before fallenness. In Genesis 2:18, God says that Adam was alone, and it was *"not good."* Several verses before Adam and Eve fell into sin (Genesis 3:6), God declared it was not good that Adam was alone. Ferguson observes, *"Ministering acceptance and removing a person's aleness does not mean that we condone sin. Rather, it means that we look deeper in order to see people's needs."*

