

Stage 3: Childhood. Connected Disciple.

Mark 3:13-4:20.

In the first two stages of discipleship, you built your life on its only sure foundation, on the solid rock of Jesus Mashiach and his authority as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Your growth was like a newborn bonding with his or her parent and learning to walk with him in the world. However, children born into the world are not meant for isolation but live and grow up in families. For, in these secure and kindred relationships, children can freely play, experiment, and discover the ways of connecting which will form the lasting bonds in future households, families, and generations of children.

The third stage of your discipleship is to become a “Connected” disciple—living with other children of the Lord’s House and Kingdom in freedom and unity.

Now, you might wonder why this third stage of development is important, following the dramatic growth that has already happened in your spirit *rebirth* and the honor you've experienced as you have learned to follow and walk with the Lord Jesus Mashiach himself.

In human development, one might ask why “play” in childhood matters, and in the spiritual development of disciples, why is it important that disciples now learn to *know* Jesus Mashiach ***together?***

In this third stage of your development as a disciple, these questions uncover a key mystery of the Lord God's plan for Mashiach and his future Kingdom. For, if discipleship merely spanned two stages of growth, and the Lord Jesus Mashiach gathered to himself an anonymous crowd of servants, an army of unrelated individuals, could he still not achieve the Kingdom's victory over the earth?

To think this way is to ignore the Lord God's original covenant with David and his purpose for David's Seed raised up as Mashiach. God does not simply want a Kingdom imposed upon this earth by a sheer act of power. Rather, Mashiach is God's Heir—as the Son of God, an Heir who from the beginning was destined to inherit the “heavens” and the “earth.” And, as God's Firstborn Son, Mashiach was not meant to inherit as an *only child* but as the Firstborn among “many brothers.” For, as Mashiach, the “pierced One” (Psalm 22:16, Zechariah 12:10) says in the heavenly congregation: “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you” (Psalm 22:22). So, why is *knowing Jesus together as disciples* a needed next step?

- **Born into a Family and House:** Jesus Mashiach must be the “firstborn” of many brothers (Romans 8:29-30), so we were born not into abandonment and isolation, or even

anonymous attendees of a “megachurch,” but we were spiritually born into the Family of God and its family structure. So, to be part of Mashiach’s family Household is the *greater purpose* for your salvation. Contrary to selfish western thinking, you were not redeemed for your own sake but for *His*.

- **Unifying relationship:** Remember that the defining quality of the Son of God’s family of *Elohim* is its “oneness” (Deuteronomy 6:4). So, the unifying bond connecting all the members of the House of God with one another, through our generations, across all dividing lines, is our Lord Jesus Mashiach, who makes “one” two distinct populations (Ephesians 2:15). Knowing Jesus individually and then “proclaiming him” to one another enables us to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

- **Sanctifying the Flesh:** Though we are Spirit-born children of God, we still are tested on this earth, remaining in our *fleshly bodies* which naturally long for the *lusts, isolation, and* pride of this world. So, to live together, we must live in *subjection*—“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). Without the restraints and the corrections of our familial relationships, the Kingdom would become a place of self-ambition, domination, and tyranny.
- **Entrusted with Family Responsibility:** Consider the great and history-culminating work of the Kingdom of God. Who will be given this great responsibility to *establish* the rule in human hearts of our great Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Mashiach? Strangers and the mercenaries? No, our Father God entrusts to his sons the royal calling to bring households into the Kingdom and to disciple

them to honor our Lord Jesus Mashiach! God entrusts this great responsibility and gives the spiritual power to accomplish this work to his sons! For, it is these sons who will be appointed in the Kingdom when it comes, lest the rule be given to strangers.

Thus, as you move into Stage 3 and the “childhood” season of your discipleship, be ready to connect with your fellow brothers and sisters to live in the Lord’s Kingdom House!

For, only *together* as his “body” on earth, will you experience together the Lord’s power and authority revealed to overcome the *enemy’s* dark Kingdom. Together, as his Household, you will have the power to advance the Kingdom of God in the face of *spiritual opposition*.

Together, you will plant the Word of God and will see a harvest of faith spring up around you!

Key Verse.

13 And he went up on the mountain and **called to him** those whom **he desired**, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he **appointed twelve** (whom he also named apostles) so that they might **be with him** and he might **send them out to preach** ¹⁵ and have **authority** to **cast out demons**.

Developmental Disciple Stage:

In human development, children develop the foundational skills of interaction both in the home and at play with peers. Importantly, childhood provides safe and forgiving relationships which help the child grow out of selfish isolation to learn to share, negotiate, and cooperate with their peers.

In your discipleship, the same valuable characteristics of *fellowship*—to share and cooperate with your family members—is developed in the safety of the *family of God*, furnished with God’s “grace and peace.”

In the *family of God*, learn to obey the Lord’s calling on your life to live in *subjection* with others “out of reverence for Mashiach.”

Milestone/ Abilities:

In this third stage of discipleship, the growth milestone is your ability to live in *fellowship* together with other disciples, moving out of the *formative periods of isolation* which so critically centered your life in the life of Jesus Mashiach. Now, share him and what you have learned of him with your fellow disciples, that you might all mature in knowing him together.

To reach this *milestone of unity in fellowship*, you will need certain skills: being able to share the

Word to build faith in others; learning to encourage the hearts of your family, so that you together can grow into maturity in Mashiach; and, growing in faith to begin to bring the Word of God to people in the world.

A. Knowing/ Responding to Jesus:

As a disciple, it is a necessary step that you move in Stage 3 from knowing Jesus individually and personally to know him as the Lord and Head of the entire family, lest you become fixated on your own personal needs and interests. In the early years of its life, a small child naturally is focused on his own needs and growth. But, growing into childhood and being part of a larger family teaches the child that he is neither the center of his parent's life nor the focus of the universe! Rather, he is part of a larger family, and, together, they share in their Lord's purpose for the family—not

simply to meet the needs of the children but to take its place among other families.

Thus, to know Jesus as Mashiach, who builds a Household for David (2 Samuel 7:11) and for God (13), is to know him as part of a family. For, he is sent as the kinsman-redeemer of his family, restoring from their exclusion and exile. So, if are to be *reborn* by the Holy Spirit, you are reborn into the Household of God as your Father and Jesus Mashiach as your family Lord, the Head of his Household. If you refuse to be part of this *unity of God's household*, there is no place for you but as a “withering branch,” cut off and destined for burning (John 15:6).

But, how shall we know Jesus as Mashiach as part of his household? He is our personal Lord, so how does this differ from his role as the Lord and Head of our family?

- Serving the Lord who Identifies with us:

Because we all *abide in Jesus Mashiach* as the “branches” live together in the “vine” (John 15:5-10), to know and grow in Jesus are processes that occur *in his “body,” the disciples whom he indwells* on earth. How we treat even the least and neediest among us is to help Jesus directly. If the smallest tooth becomes infected, the pain engulfs the entire body and person (1 Corinthians 12).

- **Proclaiming the Lord to each other.**

The Lord works and reveals himself to each brother/ sister disciple in Mashiach’s *body* on earth (Colossians 2:19). So, when we “proclaim” (1:28) him to one another, we all share in these insights of the Lord and how he works, so that our “body” builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:16).

- **Maturing as disciples to know the Lord according to our development.**

In the household, each disciple will be at different stages of growth, and each stage of growth allows them to know the Lord Jesus in a maturing way.

As we have seen, the early stages of growth teach the disciple to know Jesus in the power and provision of his Lordship, coming to him in total dependence and walking with him faithfully. The gap in maturity separating Lord and his disciple is vast. Yet, as the disciple grows, he or she is given more responsibility and shares the Lord's burden to care for the Household. As disciples grow, they increasingly resemble and model their lives after their Lord, and their relationship become more mutual and sharing. Eventually, disciples *shepherd* the family as the Lord Jesus works through them as the Over-shepherd. They partner together in feeding the flock.

Thus, living together in the Lord's house provides the relationships, needs, and responsibilities necessary for disciples to grow up in their intimacy and fellowship with the Lord Jesus himself, maturing into fellow servants with him in caring for the family. It is like an infant

looking up to his older brother. As this infant passes into adolescence and then adulthood, raising a family of his own, this once great gap is now closed so that the brothers can relate to one another as fellows. Even so, Jesus says to his maturing disciples, “I no longer call you servants but friends” and “go and tell my brothers” (John 15:15; Matthew 28:10).

Remember. As you grow up as a disciple and the great distance becomes a brotherly fellowship between you and your Lord, He will always remain the “Lord your God” and worthy of your subjection and worship, even as he calls you near as his “friend” (Jeremiah 30:9)!

B. Living in His Household:

When you are a disciple of Jesus Mashiach, your family is to be the chief House of all the houses of the earth, for our calling is to be the family of God

and Man to inherit the “heavens” and the “earth” (Genesis 2:4). So, our Lord Jesus is not called exclusively to meet the needs of his disciple-children, but he is called **purposefully** *to build a House* (us), that will establish the “throne” of his “Kingdom” ruling all “heaven” and “earth” forever (2 Samuel 7:16). This is his high calling, so it is our shared family calling as well.

So, in this third stage of your development as a disciple, you are to know Jesus as the “Lord of his House,” who calls and appoints the members of his household together. Hear, then, the Lord’s calling to a family. For these first disciples, it was to gather as brothers as “the Twelve.” Other households are more diverse generationally, socially, or strategically. Most families are called to share life in Jesus together as *kindred members*. Other family groups have more strategic or focused purposes—to bring the Kingdom to dark and inaccessible places; to endure hardship as a

witness to the hard-hearted; to establish the Kingdom's presence amidst opposition.

Regardless, every household to which our Lord Jesus calls you is marked by his characteristic *unity* and *love*, so that you might stand against the enemy Kingdom to draw its captives into the freedom of our family.

C. Establishing His Throne and Kingdom:

Because you are now of the House of the Lord Jesus, called to “bind” the strong man to dispossess him of his captives, Jesus Mashiach now entrusts to you and to all of us the “secrets” of the Kingdom of God. Most importantly, Jesus reveals to us how the Word of God bears the fruit of faith as it takes hold in hearts. But, different heart conditions will affect the Word's growth: hardened, rocky, or choking conditions must all be overcome for the Word of God to take root.

Assessment Question:

Further Discovery: