



# *Christian Book Reports*

*Jim Hoffman*



# *Search & Rescue*

## *Neil Cole*

**A former lifeguard who translates all of the truisms of saving drowning people to reaching lost souls – the parallels are incredible.**

**Neil is also the founder of CMA Resources, a disciple making resource organization.**





## *What is a disciple?*

**“The word disciple, however, has been used and abused so much that its meaning is no longer clear. It no longer has the romantic, larger than life connotation it should have. Because the Greek word can mean 'pupil;' we have turned discipleship into a lesson in cognitive learning-the more you know, the more advanced you are in following the Master. But that connotation is just not sufficient. Moving from workbook five to workbook six is not an adequate understanding of discipleship.” Neil Cole**

**Jesus used the expression ‘Follow me’ no less than 20 times in just what is recorded in the gospels.**



# *Good Enough?*

**“In writing his last words to his spiritual son, Paul was looking for something that would inspire Timothy to fight the good fight and finish the race as a hero, just as Paul was doing. He knew that continuing on in life without transformation is not success but failure. Sometimes I fear that parents and pastors alike will be content if their children and parishioners just hold on and do not fall away. I can understand this fear, but simply holding on is not godly faith. Jesus didn't die and rise again so that we can stay the same, and for Paul, this was abject failure. We are to be more than mere survivors; we are to be victors in Christ.” Neil Cole**

**2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. NIV**



## *The Goal is Transformation.*

**“The gospel powerfully transforms us from what we once were into what we can and should be. "I will do the best I can" is just not enough. We are not to do what we can, because it is not what we do that makes a difference. We must step out in faith and attempt to do the impossible, even at great risk, if we are to be the heroes God has called us to be. Jesus's sacrifice deserves nothing less. The power of God comes when our own power is either exhausted or set aside.” Neil Cole**

**There seems to be a great deal of difference between what God accepts and what he rewards. He accepts us as we are – he rewards what we allow him to do through us.**



## *Knowledge Puffs Up*

**“We tend to think that knowing sound doctrine is all that is needed for godliness. I would argue that sound doctrine is not mere knowledge but practical and radical obedience from a heart of love (see Titus 2).**

**Unfortunately, in much of the Western church we have come to think that having knowledge is enough.**

**Knowledge does not change a life in any way other than puffing up one's ego (see 1 Cor. 8:1-3). It is love that transforms.” Neil Cole**

**How many of us have settled for being the brightest among the dim or the highest of the low when God wants to make us so much more?**



# *Are we guilty of contempt for the gospel?*

**“Sometimes, however, familiarity breeds contempt. We are so close to the facts inherent in the gospel that we have lost sight of the true nature and power that are intrinsic to it. We actually have a reduced view of what the gospel is. In much of Christendom, I fear the gospel has become a small statement of facts that one must agree to intellectually to be welcomed into the "club".**

**Neil Cole**

**I would add to Neil’s statement that we care more about our members having right answers than having a righteous life.**



## *Jesus is Lord*

**“We have a saying in our ministry: "Where you go, the King goes, and where the King goes, people bow." The idea is that you bring the rule of Christ with you. Where Christ rules, things change. The gospel is not just a set of facts to believe; it is a change in allegiance and therefore a change in life. Someone who accepts the gospel does not just accept a few facts about Christ, he or she accepts the rule of Christ as King—a King with all authority over heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18-20). Imagine what we could do with such authority filling our sails.” Neil Cole**

**Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV**





## *A Changed Life*

**“This is where the path of disciple making begins-with a changed life. If your own life isn't transformed by the power of Christ's reign, you have no business trying to make other disciples. Once a life is changed by the presence of Christ ruling over his kingdom subjects, each person becomes a change agent. There is no system, program, or tool that man can fashion that will have the power to change a life. Only the gospel has that power. Only the presence of Christ and all his authority can set captives free and overturn injustice and evil.” Neil Cole**

**I do not wish to engage in a discussion of whether Jesus can be Savior without being Lord, but I think we can state with no equivocation that only healthy trees produce good fruit.**



## *The Gospel is for Christians too.*

**“The gospel is not just for the unbeliever but for the Christian. It's the "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). In fact I don't think the non-Christian will take the cross seriously until we Christians take it seriously. It's not enough that we have once tasted the blessing of the cross. To attract the lost to Jesus, we need to have an appetite for the gospel. The more it means to us, the more attractive it will be to the lost. Why should they be interested in something in which we feign interest? If they don't see that the gospel is vital to us, why would they find it compelling?” Neil Cole**

**When Paul told us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds he did not have in mind a once and done event – it is a process.**



## *Use the right measure.*

**“Some older Christians have done away with certain obvious sins, and their spiritual life is now placid and, in their own minds, holy. But comparing ourselves with ourselves is foolishness and is not anywhere near what holiness is all about (see 2 Cor. 10:12). For the one who is truly becoming sanctified in Christ is taking on more and more the character of Christ and realizes more and more the distance he or she still has to go to realize the fullness of Christ.” Neil Cole**

**The goal is Christlikeness, not relative goodness.**



## *When someone does not want your help.*

“Perhaps the most frustrating rescue is when a lifeguard spots a strong rip current pulling a weak swimmer out to sea. The guard dashes out of the tower, rips off his jacket, and straps on the rescue can. He leaps over the first wave, hurdles the second wave, dives under the third, and swims as fast as he can to the victim. As he approaches, he pulls the rescue can over and hands it to the weak swimmer who looks back at him in indignation and says, "What are you doing out here? I don't need your help." Neil Cole

**Matthew 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. NIV**



## *Keep your feet clean.*

“When Jesus sends out others to rescue souls, however, he is very clear that if they do not find hearts that are receptive to salvation, they are to wipe the dust off their feet and move on to another place in search of those who need rescuing. The first criterion to look for in someone whom you wish to rescue and disciple is that he or she have an internal sense of desperation that is greater than his or her pride. This means that the person is willing to take hold of the Good News and receive the rescue can. We simply cannot rescue people who do not want to be rescued. Jesus himself will not even violate this truth.” Neil Cole

**Jesus had no trouble sending those away who were not willing participants in their salvation.**



## *Fertilizer makes people desperate.*

**“There is a temptation to think that good people make good soil for the seed of the gospel. In our church, however, we have a saying: Bad people make good soil. There's a lot of fertilizer in their lives. Fruitful plants tend to grow best where the fertilizer is abundant. Some people are drowning in the fertilizer of poor decisions and acts of unrighteousness.” Neil Cole**

**Luke 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." NIV**



## *David's Mighty Men*

**“David was supposed to be a king of God's chosen people. He became captain of the crooked, marshal of the misfits, ruler of the rejects, emperor of the exiled. The people whom nobody wanted to have around became the people David befriended. They lived together and fought together. They became a family, a tribe, and eventually an army.” Neil Cole**

**The men David befriended became nobler just by being around him – just as iron sharpens iron.**



## *Matthew 28*

**“These are the last words of Jesus to his close companions. You cannot find words that are more lasting in their implication or intention. There is not a nobler mission than this. These words are for every follower of Christ. They carry within them a reproductive pattern of obedience-oriented training. Christ commands us to make disciples and to teach them to observe his commands, including the making of disciples.” Neil Cole**

**Making disciples is no more difficult than what was modeled by Jesus – he found some willing followers and spent time with them. Have we taken the profoundly simple and made it profoundly complicated?**





## *Education or Obedience?*

**“The church in the West is educated beyond its obedience, and more education will not help. What is needed is more obedience. Knowledge is not enough. What you do with what you know is the important thing. Knowledge is not measured by the facts you know. Knowledge is measured by how you put into practice in real life what you know.” Neil Cole**

**If I am at all representative of the average American Christian, then I conclude that we do not need another book or another program – we need to obey what we already know.**



## *I could start a church?*

**“Most of the people reading this book already know enough to be useful in serving the Lord. But for some reason we have been trained to think that we do not know enough to do anything really important. I have heard that if you took all those who are starting churches in the world and made a composite of the average church planter, she would be eighteen years old, Chinese, having read very few books, and without seminary training.”**

Neil Cole

**We have abdicated our mission to the professionals and it is time to ask, “how is that working out?”**



## *LTG's*

**“After a few decades of serving the Lord in developing disciples, leaders, churches, and movements, I have discovered something that is very potent. If you can package something extremely powerful in something extremely simple, it can have a profound impact on the world.”** Neil Cole

**Bible – Confession - Prayer**



# *Hero?*

**“A hero is one who embraces death, for Jesus, for him- or herself, for the sake of others. A favorite story of mine that exhibits the courage and sacrifice of a hero is from a volunteer at a local hospital. The hero was a five-year-old brother to Liza, who was suffering from a serious disease. Liza needed a transfusion, and her little brother was the best match. Liza's doctor explained the situation to him and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. He hesitated for just a moment, took a deep breath, and said, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save Liza. As the transfusion progressed, he lay on a bed next to his sister. Everyone smiled as they saw the color return to Liza's cheeks. But the boy's face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?"”**





***Questions / Comments***

