

Defining Discipleship

Quick Testimony – I got born again at 15. At the age of 16 I was called into the ministry. I searched for a mentor or a spiritual father. Never could find one. I had a pastor, when I asked him to teach me how to be a Pastor, He told me, if the preach is in you it will come out... FAILED Miserably!

Went to bible college, asked a professor if he would mentor me, he said I'll let you preach to the students next week. Well I had gotten a little better... "you don't need me to mentor you, your ability to preach will guarantee you're a successful ministry" this was such bad advice!!! I needed to know so much more than just how to preach!

Got married and had two children... started a church and unexpectedly my Wife is Killed.

Bethany years - With 2 small children to raise and protect. I resigned my church plant and accepted a Job offer in my home town with one of the leading churches in America. Got healed, learned a lot, met a girl and got married to my second wife and we got established as a family.

I was blessed there at my days with Larry Stockstill and Bethany Church. I learned about the power of God's presence. 2 Main pieces of Kingdom Ministry. Preaching the Word... and The Presence of God!

6 years after my first wife's death – God spoke to me to Plant a Church in Tennessee!

The Church Plant started well. We had 2 couples who joined me and my wife. Within a couple of years of hard work, we had hundreds of people in the church. People come people go, One day they love us the next day they would lose interest and disappear.

One day I think we have a healthy church and I think we are ready to take the city, the next day... our leaders are falling into sin... or getting attacked or discouraged and disappearing.

- I was so troubled by the great start and then failure during the times of testing.
- I began asking what was I doing wrong as a Pastor.

I noticed a 2 year cycle.

- Year one, Saved and on Fire.
- Year two, Testing through Trials

The Parallel the Jews out of Egypt

- Called Out of Egypt (type of Salvation – Egypt world, slavery to sin)
- Through the Wilderness of Testing (God intentionally took them through the wilderness to prepare them to possess their land.
- Into the Promise Land (Journey to the Promised Land a type of our New Life in Jesus)

De. 1:6-8 ESV The Lord our God said to us in Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7 Turn and take your journey... 8 See, I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them.'

This is why we called our 1-year Discipleship Experience "the Journey".

Vision: Next year we are doing a new update and install of our 1 Year Journey Discipleship Experience. I want to cast some vision for it today and next Sunday.

Lets Define Discipleship

Discipleship is one of those biblical words that is underused and underdefined. Yet, the world disciple is the word Jesus used to describe his all-in followers

“Christian” vs “Disciple”

- The word “Christian” is never used in the gospels and is only used 3 times in the NT epistles.
- The word “Disciple” is used over 260 times in the NT.

The word Christian has become a broad title for church people, right wingers, or non-jews or non-muslims.

- “Christian” often identifies casual church goers or southern bible belt conservatives.

The word Disciple identifies people as deeply devoted Christ-followers.

Working definition:

A disciple is a person who is learning to live the life Jesus lived and with his life, he is helping others do the same.

3 Marks of Discipleship

Relationship: Knowing Jesus

1) Jesus desires deep intimacy with His disciples.

John 14:1-23 NIV Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

Have you ever been so in love with someone its like they are inside of you?

Mushy: there are times when I am hugging Kerri so tightly and feeling the love so strongly, I wish I could squeeze her heart into mine.

21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” **22** Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” **23** Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

- Discipleship is more than a faith in a distant deity.
- Its more than an affection for a Holy Book .
- Its more than a Sunday Morning tradition.

Discipleship is a deep desire to become consumed with a love for Jesus! To live your life IN Him! no matter what comes your way... no matter what others say...

2) Jesus defines love as the predominate trait among the relationships of his disciples.

a) Not just a love for Christ, but a love for one another!

John 8:34,25 NIV “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:12-15 NIV When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. **13** “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so,

for that is what I am. **14** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should **do as I have done** for you.

A disciple is a person who is learning to live the life Jesus lived and with his life, he is helping others do the same.

Not just a love for other disciples, but a love for lost people in the world or outside of the church.

Yesterday in our Ministry House. We did a Major Baby Shower for a Kurdish Family who decided not to have an abortion.

We showered them with Christian Life Love! This is what disciples of Christ do!

Priority: Putting Jesus First

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my **disciple** must **deny themselves** and **take up their cross** and **follow me**...

1) Discipleship is not optional for people who want to follow Jesus.

a) Today the Gospel of the Kingdom has become a Man-centered Gospel.

i) We don't seem to get the "take up our cross" idea.

Take up your cross – pay the price, deal with your difficulties, **don't quit on Jesus when things get hard!**

ii) The Argentine Pastor; Juan Carlos Ortiz, "most modern day preachers today present the message as **the gospel of the big offer; the gospel of the Hot Sale or the irresistible special deal**" "don't you want to accept Jesus today?"

We have told people "If you will accept Jesus you will have joy, you will have peace, health, prosperity..." if you give 10 dollars God will give you 20 back... we are always appealing to man's interest.

a) Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart.... As though we have a poor Jesus is hoping to come in...

i) Recently a leading national preacher was found on TV, daring people to try Jesus. He was offering them a money back guarantee, like a used car salesman.

Another church I heard about recently, says tithe for a year and if you don't see an increase, we will pay you back everything you gave?!?!?!?

Christianity has become the gospel of the big offer!

ii) "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

b) Coming to Jesus is not Optional!

i) You don't take Jesus out for a test drive like a used car!

ii) When Jesus saw Zaccheus in the tree. Jesus didn't give him an option.... Jesus told him **get down man... I'm coming to your house today!**

After his encounter with Jesus, Zaccheus gave back everything he had stolen... He denied himself, took up his cross and followed Jesus!

2) **Coming to Jesus is the premier decision of your life not just another decision.**

John 14:26 NLT If you want to be my **disciple**, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

a) Jesus is saying **your devotion to me will not equalled too** or will not parallel the other devotions you in life.

- i) Ooh I cant go to that church my grandpa would roll over in his grave.
- ii) My brother is going to make fun of me...
- iii) My family would disown me if I go to THAT church.

b) Jesus will not be another **icon** on the **desktop of your life**.

- I have all these apps on my computer and on my phone... I am constantly shuffling them around. The most important ones the priority

Jesus is not an Icon on my desktop... Jesus is the Desktop! **He doesn't get shuffled around!**

- **He will either be Lord of all, I or he will not be Lord at all.**

Obedience: Obeying Jesus at All Cost

John 8:31 NIV To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you **hold to my teaching**, you are **really my disciples**.

Note: Jesus is clear there were some who followed Jesus, but they were NOT real disciples.

1) **Jesus did not treat his teachings** as if it was **good advice** or **optional wisdom**.

a) On one occasion Jesus told the crowd that unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood you cannot have any part of me. They heard with their natural ears and not the ears of their spirit.

John 6:66-69 NIV From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. **67**"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. **69** We have come to **believe** and **to know** that you are the Holy One of God.

2) **Disciples obey even when it makes no sense in the natural.**

Luke 5:1-8 NLT One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. **2** He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. **3**Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." **5** "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. **But if you say so**, I'll let the nets down again." **6** And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! **7** A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. **8** When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man."

In the Journey Discipleship Experience we take the teachings of Jesus, define them and hold fast to them.

The Top 10 Teaching Themes of Jesus

- 1) The Existence and Nature of God
- 2) The Kingdom of Heaven
- 3) The Making of Disciples
- 4) The Reality of Hell/Judgment
- 5) His Own Identity
- 6) The Power of Prayer
- 7) The Necessity of Faith
- 8) The New Commandment of Love
- 9) The Heart of the Father
- 10) Obedience to His Word

Conclusion:

How do you know if you are a disciple? **There will be results**. Your relationship with Him will bear fruit.

John 15:8 NIV This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

A disciple is a person who is learning to live the life Jesus lived and with his life, he is helping others do the same.