Olive Drive Church

Lesson 68: Thursday January 19, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

We learned two lessons ago what the Universal Church is. We said it is *all the members of the body of Christ, made up of people from all around the world. It is all who are called out of darkness, regenerated, and set apart by God’s saving grace. It is all the genuine believers in Jesus.*

Tonight we focus briefly on how these true believers live in this world and then the great commission God has commanded upon all of us.

Let’s read our first of three Q/A for this lesson:

**Q103. How does the Church live in this world?**

The Church lives as worshipers of Jesus, making disciples, giving glory to God in all things.

There are three very important markers of the Church in that answer. Remember, we are talking about the Universal Church, so this is about ALL Christians. All Christians are to be living as worshipers of Jesus, making disciples, giving glory to God in all things.

Let’s start at the end of that answer, because it is absolutely critical to get right. We must realize that everything that God has planned and everything we do is for the glory of God. We’ve studied this at length at Disciples Church.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

We must know that we exist for God’s glory—not our fame, our temporary hopes, our pride—no; we exist for God’s glory.

Practically then, all we do, including most certainly the discipleship we will talk about in detail tonight, is for God’s glory. Our ultimate aim in all that we do must be the aim of bringing glory to God.

Now, with God’s glory as the banner of our lives, how do we live in this world?

Our answer begins by saying the church, each of us, are to live “as worshipers of Jesus.”

This is so important. Do you realized this must be the marker of your life? Are you a Christian? Then you are a worshiper of God! Is that how you live? Is that what people say about you? Have people heard you worshiping Jesus? Look at these passages:

**Psalm 105:1-3** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

**Psalm 96:1-5** Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

**Psalm 96:10** Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”

These are just a taste of how the Bible calls us to live as worshipers of God in this world!

“Rejoice!”

“Sing praises!”

“Give thanks to the Lord!”

“Bless His name!”

“Make known His deeds among the world!”

“Declare his glory among the nations!”

These are the actions of a Christian! A worshiper of Jesus!

Church, please see tonight that my life, your life, all lives of all the Christians in this world, should be active in being worshipers of Jesus. We should be known for our joy in Him, our praise of Him, our understanding of Him, our proclamation of Him, our calling and teaching others to follow Him!

And that transitions us to our big focus for tonight. *How does the Church live in this world? The Church lives as worshipers of Jesus, making disciples, giving glory to God in all things.* “Making disciples.” Let’s focus on how all Christians, all worshipers of Jesus, are to be in discipleship: being discipled, and when readied, making disciples.

God is committed to His plan from eternity past that He have a people for Himself who exist to worship Him; therefore, worship is the goal and the fuel of discipleship.

Our worship of Jesus, or public proclamation of Him and His gospel, feeds our discipleship. The first requirement of being a disciple of Jesus is being saved into Jesus. Discipleship begins with saving faith in Jesus.

People must be told about Jesus, because there is no salvation and no worship of Him where the gospel of the crucified and risen, perfect Messiah is not heard and believed. We have covered this truth thoroughly at Disciples Church.

Our understanding of Scriptures, our reformed theology, sees the need for and compels us to preach the gospel and call all people to repentance and trust in Jesus alone.

God is committed to gathering His elect from all the peoples of the world and making them worshipers. Because we have tasted the joy of worshiping Jesus, we want share in this joy with others around the world.

So, if you’re tracking with me so far, you will recognize that we don’t just “evangelize” and then consider our work done. So many fall into that trap; they do the work of preaching the gospel, but they don’t do the ever-important work of discipleship.

This is one of the church growth era’s fallouts. During that era in our history, the church was consumed with getting people in the door and having them pray the sinner’s prayer. This was due in part to bad theology and due in part to failed discipleship of the leaders in this time. What you will see in proper discipleship is a replica of the discipler. If this had been done with the leaders of the church growth era, then we may have missed this horrible trend of evangelism sans discipleship. On a personal note, this is why we saw huge youth groups with tons of kids who disappeared after high school: they were evangelized but never taught how or what the Christian life looks like. This is one reason we have made some of the tougher decisions in our youth so that we can turn a focus to discipleship and actually have youth who know what the Christian life is and how to live it out. Can you imagine a church where the youth are prepared to make disciples in their college years instead of being made disciples by their colleges or the world they live in?

This really has been a sad trend. That’s not how God commanded things. That’s like seeing a baby being born and then leaving it on the curb. Emotional and such about the birth, but careless and hands-off in the raising and instructing of that little one. That’s why God ordained, and our Lord Jesus in the flesh commanded, discipleship: so that we can be His practical means under His providential work, to instruct and care for true converts.

Oh church, discipleship is so critical. True discipleship: full New Testament discipleship. That’s what we need to know, seek, and do. Let’s jump in to this now.

Our next question tonight is:

**Q104. What is the *Great Commission* Jesus gave to His Church?**

He commissions His Church to be discipled and make disciples among all nations.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

After Jesus had resurrected and prior to Him ascending back into heaven, He meets with His disciples and gives them a final charge. The charge is clear and simple although it is very deep: “Go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Now notice something bookending these verses: Jesus begins with, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore…” Jesus says to His disciples (by the way, if you are a Christian then this is to you as well), “I have authority over everything; since that is the case, you need to go. Go and make disciples.” Then He ends it with one of my absolute favorite verses: “And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Do we really live like this truth has sunk into our hearts and minds? If you truly believed your Lord has all authority over all things and He is with you always till the end of the age, then shouldn’t our lives look a bit different?! I am here saying this for my very own ears; you are not alone in the conviction of our lackluster.

That being said, church, what’s stopping you?! Our Lord and Savior Jesus who has all authority has told us to go and make disciples, and He has promised to be with us! Let me submit to you that if you are not being discipled or discipling, it very well may be out of fear: fear of losing something, fear of addressing something, fear of vulnerability or lifestyle change. It is fear, though, none the less. What, church, do you have to fear if the Lord who has all authority is with you?!

There is an amazing passage that I read in 2003, and I have never got it out of my head:

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. 19When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

24“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

26“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

What have you and I to fear? Not death, for the One who holds the power of death and life and eternal standing is the very One who has called us to go and promises to be with us! Oh, church, that you would lay aside your fears and trust in the Lord you claim to trust in. Discipleship is hard! It does have a cost, but what are you losing by avoiding it? What is the lack of discipleship costing you? It does cost us greatly to not live in the commanded will of God. Be sure of that. This is a cost you don’t want.

But discipleship will also cost you. It will cost you temporary things. Things worth giving up for King Jesus.

Luke 14:25-33 ESV [25] Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, [26] “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. [27] Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. [28] For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? [29] Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, [30] saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ [31] Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? [32] And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. [33] So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Church, if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, it will cost you temporal things no doubt: perhaps retirement, comfort, family, toys, and wealth, but what do you get in return? You get Jesus! Is He worth it to you? Is He your highest aim; is Jesus the thing you want most in this life? If so, then are you being discipled? Are you discipling? If Jesus is your highest love, then you will obey His commandment no matter the cost. The implications of this passage are huge! If you obey Jesus, will you have to be single the rest of your life? It is possible. If you obey Jesus, will you have to work a job every day the rest of your life until you die? It is possible. Will you have to give up a job that causes you to be absent too much to truly do discipleship? It is possible. What do you love more? Do you love Jesus or the things you’re afraid of losing? If you truly love Jesus, does it mean you’ll have to confess sin that has been hidden for years? Yes, but take it from someone who has had to do this, there is so much more life in our obedience. You’re not going to lose more than you gain. You gain Jesus. Just listen again with fresh ears to what the Apostle Paul says about this:

Philippians 1:20-21 ESV [20] as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. [21] For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 3:7-11 ESV [7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—[10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul declares that all things are as nothing compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus as our Lord. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” It is my earnest prayer, church, for all of you that this would be your heart. Lay down your foolish pride, and take up your cross. Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

There is a cost to discipleship, and as Scripture calls people to, each of us must count these costs. This is the first practical step to discipleship. And we’re going to get into these practical things now. You may be thinking, “Ok, I see Jesus’s command for discipleship and I hear that word used a lot. But what does that look like, how do I do that?” So let’s begin our transition to answer that. There are some materials that some of us who are discipling have been using and working on. I’m going to read from some of those periodically, and I want to read from one of them now.

I want to do my best to remove any excuses you may have, and I want you to count the cost of discipleship. We do not want a lot of people to feel convicted for a short time to dive in and then drop out because you have not rightly considered what it may cost you. I also don’t want to watch my family grow into old age and realize that there was never a call to you to be obedient to Jesus and see the true life He has for you. I do not know anyone who truly dove into discipleship and remained in it that has not lost and gained more than they could ever have imagined.

I do not need to argue about the command to be a disciple maker; it is very clear. But Jesus did not tell 11 men who had just been saved to go and make disciples. He told 11 men who had lived with him for three years to go and make disciples. He told them to teach their disciples to observe (obey/keep) all that He had taught them. Me standing on a stage and telling you that you must be in discipleship does nothing to help you observe God’s commands. It is much more than just teaching someone truth; it is showing someone how to obey to keep the things that the Lord has taught. This means that if you have not been discipled, you cannot be a discipler.

I have shared this before, but I want to share it again:

Discipleship is you trusting the person who’s discipling you with every aspect of your life. You come to your discipler and you say, “here is my life: any area at all, you have access to it. What do I do, how do I honor and follow Christ?” This is something you must want to do. You can’t come halfhearted, or you will waste your time and theirs. Jesus gave His parting commission to the church, saying, “Go, make disciples of all nations…” Church you cannot be a discipler until you’ve been discipled, and you can’t be a disciple if you’re not all in.

Before we move into our last question, I want to read a few more verses about being a disciple/discipler:

**Luke 24:47 “**…repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

**1 John 1:7** ...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

**2 Timothy 2:2** (NASB) The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**Titus 2:3-5** Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

**Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

**Romans 15:14** I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

**Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

These lead well into our last question:

**Q105. How do we honor the Great Commission?**

Based on the Bible, we follow and learn from mature Christians, and we teach others to rightly know and obey Jesus.

Here is our definition of Discipleship:

**Discipleship:** Follow and learn from more mature Christians and do the work of disciple-making ourselves--calling people to saving faith, then training them in sound doctrine and how live as imitators of Christ.

Since it is clear that we must be a discipler in order to disciple, and we ***must*** go make disciples, then the logical question is how? What does this look like?

Let’s look at our main verse again; this is the one that people call the great commission:

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We need to see some broader details here then get into more specifics on how they work out, starting where we always should, with Jesus. Jesus bookends this commission with His authority and His presence--we saw that earlier. We cannot disciple without the power and presence of Jesus. It must be in Him and through Him; we are desperate for His work, and it must be about Him.

Next, the verse says to go into all nations and do this. So everyone who is in the universal Church (all true believers everywhere) are to be doing this discipleship.

Then the verse says to baptize them. Baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ. It doesn’t save, but it says to the world, “I am professing faith in Christ.” Clearly that is important for disciples of Jesus. In case you are wondering, if you are beginning discipleship and are a true believer who has been baptized, you won’t need to get baptized again--for you’ve satisfied the call to this part of the command.

Next, it says we are to teach them to obey/keep all the things Jesus has commanded us to keep. Let me shed some light on this: because Jesus is God and the Scriptures are the word of God, then all of Scripture’s commands that we are called to keep under the New Covenant are commands of Jesus.

This has become a huge error in our day. Many people will say, “Jesus never said this or that, so it clearly wasn’t a big deal. I just want to know what Jesus said.” Well, church, here (hold up the Bible): if it is in here, it is the word of God; it is set forth by Jesus’s authority. The word of our triune God will not conflict with the one eternal will of our triune God. Jesus isn’t going, “I don’t know, Father, I think this is good enough; we don’t need to go that far.” Of course not. The argument people have used that Jesus didn’t say that is totally false if the Scriptures say it.

It may not have been recorded in the gospels or come from Jesus’s mouth while He was on earth, but if it is in Scripture, it is the very word of the triune God, and that includes Jesus. Church, the world wants to have salvation and a relationship with a god and have their excuse to sin. This has been removed by our God. We must, even when it causes us to deny ourselves daily to pick up our cross and follow Christ, we must obey God and quit trying to twist Scripture or throw out what we don’t like so we can pursue our sinful desires. Remember what 2 Timothy says about the Scriptures:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

All of Scripture is God’s word. Every bit of it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Why does this matter? The verse tells us why: that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Without all of Scripture, the man of God cannot be complete and equipped for every good work. We cannot be reproved when in sin if we are missing Scripture that gives us clarity on what sin is. Here is a great example: If all we had is the Old Testament, then we would not understand completely how we are to live in the New Covenant and that there are Positive Laws that have changed between these two times.

Let me be clear, God has not changed. The Positive Laws that change have changed because some things have been fulfilled (like animal sacrifices--Jesus ended this through His sacrifice). Some things have been abrogated (like the dietary restrictions of the Old Covenant; praise God we can eat bacon now!). If we who live in the New Covenant time do not have all of the Scripture, then we would not have all the information God ordained for us to know for what God has called us to now.

So now that we have the 10,000 foot view, how do we actually do it? How do we teach them to observe all that God commands us to?

Well first we must have been properly discipled. Jesus is not giving this command to a few dudes He just pulled off fishing boats. He is giving this command to 11 men whom He lived with for three years. Let me just add in here real quick: if you think your discipleship has been long, these guys had Jesus Himself and literally went with Him everywhere, all the time, for three years.

It is clear that to be able to teach someone to keep Christ’s commands then you must have been taught how to do that yourself first, right?

I am going to read to you now an overview that leadership has been working on for what a disciple should expect:

**Overview and Vision:**

The New Testament model of Christian discipleship is much different than what many have done in recent years. This has had serious effects on the Church in our day. Many local churches are filled with people who lack true depth in understanding sound doctrine and/or lack high levels of wisdom/maturity because they have not been fully discipled. Therefore, it needs to be said up front that the discipleship we seek to do is not your common day Bible study, or men’s breakfast group, or “accountability partner.” Rather, we seek to follow the model that Christ established, which is the same model we see the Apostle Paul (and others) emulate: full New Testament Christian discipleship that goes well beyond what many call discipleship in our day and age.

Jesus gave as His Great Commission: that we make disciples, teaching them to observe all that He has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). Simply stated, this means we are to follow and learn from mature Christians, and we teach others to rightly know and obey Jesus, all based on the Bible.

Don’t miss these critical words; Jesus said “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” All of life is affected and changed by the Word. Therefore, as a prospective disciple, discipleship requires you to trust the person discipling you with every aspect of your life. A disciple says to the disciple-maker, “Here is my life-- all areas of it. What do I do? Teach me how to think, feel, and act more Christian.” Discipleship means that I’m in your life and you’re in mine (as well as any others in the discipleship group), because fuller growth as a Christian doesn’t happen on our own. But this New Testament Christian discipleship is something you must want to do. You can’t come halfhearted or you’ll waste your time and others’ time. In this, something must be abundantly clear: discipleship is about conforming to Christ. Jesus’ plan for this to happen is by a person submitting to the discipleship of another *in the Lord*. As Paul said, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

God has a beautiful design in this for His glory and the good of His people.

**Core Attributes of a Christian Disciple:**

There are many biblical attributes a Christian must have, but these are the attributes that are most important to the discipleship process. These attributes must be sought by all disciples of Jesus.

**Teachable** – This is the most important attribute: all the other attributes of a disciple fall under and undergird this one.

This excerpt is adapted from the *ESV Men’s Devotional* (Crossway, 2015).

**Truly Teachable**

When I’m thinking of investing in a potential disciple, the first quality I look for is whether or not he has a teachable disposition. Is this potential disciple willing to follow the lead of a disciple-maker and submit himself fully to Scripture, the process, the leader, and the church elders?

When I observe a passionate hunger to learn and grow coupled with a genuine humility of one who is willing to follow and be taught, confronted, and corrected, there is no limit to how that person can grow and how much influence he might exert in the kingdom of God when ready to fully make disciples himself.

Teachability is commanded all through Scripture, both explicitly and implicitly. But if there is one book in the Bible that spends more time on teachability than others: it is the book of Proverbs. Here are two of the more instructive verses in Proverbs on being teachable:

*A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion* (Prov. 18:2).

*And you say, “How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors”* (Prov. 5:12-13).

Unfortunately, there are many who want to learn, but ironically don’t want to be taught-- or taught on the terms of the leader they are to follow. They want to learn on their own or according to their own plan and aren’t sincerely open to having anyone else speak into their lives. This does not glorify God or produce biblical maturity.

If a person isn’t teachable, he will be resistant to hearing all the needed instruction, both from God and from others, and will likely make little or no progress when it comes to personal growth and spiritual maturity. The unteachable person will eventually fall into other sins.

If a person is truly teachable, he will be open to whatever God shows him, through the means God has ordained, on any issue, and in regard to all sin. If a person is truly teachable, he will seek out and freely grant other people permission and freedom to speak into his life, even on matters that we might otherwise regard as extremely personal and, in other contexts, off-limits.

Are you truly teachable? Can you be confronted without bristling or making excuses for yourself? Do you have a disposition of Christian submission? Do you ask questions and listen well when you’re with more mature Christians, or are you quick to tell everyone your opinion on the topic at hand?

**The Problem of Pride**

What is the underlying cause of the lack of teachability in a man? Pride. We read this in Proverbs 26:12:

*“Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

Why is this true? It’s true because pride puts a person beyond the perceived need for instruction. The proud man says to himself, *I don’t need the wisdom of God’s Word; I’ve already got it. I don’t need the instruction and encouragement of others; I’m beyond that sort of thing. I don’t need to be held accountable for my actions; who are they to tell me what to do or not to do?* The proud-hearted man is impervious to rebuke and insensitive to conviction. That’s why he’s more hopeless than the fool.

The answer to pride, as with all sins, is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the one true God. When a person is experiencing God’s grace, he can put away fleshly pride and submit to New Testament discipleship with a truly teachable disposition.

**Accountable** – Discipleship only works if someone is accountable. More on this below.

**Committed** – Full commitment to the process, the meetings, the leader, and the church are a must.

**Meek & Humble** – Discipleship is not about position, status, or simply attaining knowledge or self-glory. Disciples must be meek: living quiet and peaceable lives; and humble: accepting the leading of another and counting others more significant than one’s self.

**Graceful** – Due to the fallen world we live in, a disciple must be quick to forgive and graceful to everyone around him. He must understand that not all people are in the same place and show patience to the weaker/less mature/less studied Christians around him.

**Patient** – A disciple doesn’t always understand the pace, content, or process of discipleship; therefore, he must be patient with the leader, himself, and those around him.

**The Two Key Focuses of New Testament Christian Discipleship:**

* **Biblical Knowledge**
  + The first key focus to Christian discipleship is growing in a right understanding of God and His truths/word.
    - Biblical study of doctrine using Scripture and other resources about Scripture
    - Understanding truth that Scripture explicitly and implicitly teaches
  + Because of the fruitful church we are a part of, we enjoy a multi-layer experience. Commonly, our Pastor is taking us through books of the Bible on Sundays; our MidWeek gathering takes us through systematic theology/topics; and discipleship will most often include studying theology/life topics in additional depth, while also doing Bible books studies occasionally.
  + The leader will choose the topics covered, the material used, the pace, and the schedule.
* **Sanctification/Maturity**
  + The second key focus to Christian discipleship is growing in biblical wisdom and sanctification (conforming to Christ in heart, mind, and deed while sinning less and repenting quicker when we do sin).
  + The Bible affects all of life. Therefore, all of life is the reach of Christian discipleship, including matters that we might otherwise regard as extremely personal and, in other contexts, off-limits.

**Additional Clarifications and Expectations:**

* **Authenticity**
  + Authentic relationships and conversation are a must. You’ll often hear me talk about my struggles, failures, and (by God’s power) successes. I need you to be authentic and honest as well.
* **Conversation & Discussion**
  + Truth in love is key. Loving honesty is required.
  + Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
  + We need to avoid gossip and stop it if it arises.
  + Let’s aim to keep our sharing primarily about ourselves, and let’s avoid 3rd/4th degree sharing (i.e. not the best use of time to talk about my sister’s friend’s co-worker).
  + People are at different depths of sound Biblical knowledge; we need an environment that always respects others’ growth process and honors God’s truth above a disciple’s personal opinion or wrong understanding.
* **Forgiveness & Honor**
  + We all bring indwelling sin to this process, so everyone must be willing to forgive quickly and honor one another. If you have an issue or can’t shake an offense/hurt, please pull that person aside privately and gently express it to seek unity. If it’s not received well, then ask me to help or another leader in the church if the problem is with me.
  + Our own fleshy feelings and emotions are often not correct. We must challenge ourselves in this area and give deference to others, especially the leader. Sometimes truth speech, even when in love, wounds/stings. This is not a bad thing. Just because a person feels hurt doesn’t mean they have been spoken to in an ungodly way. We will not live by the world’s philosophy that truth is subjective and that one’s feelings are authoritative.
* **Discipleship Accountability**
  + Every one of us in this relationship is in various forms of accountability:
    - The leader to the disciples under his leadership in various ways, and fully to the other leaders and the church elders.
    - You to other disciples in various ways, and fully to the leader and the church elders.
  + Each person must proactively honor this accountability.
    - We must proactively seek accountability by explicitly asking for it and being open about counsel needed, temptation looming, or sin that’s taken place.
    - When a brother comes to you about an issue, give him the right to speak openly and honestly, and receive his words.
    - When the leader or other church leader comes to you about an issue, add an extra layer of submission and trust to that interaction, deferring to their maturity over your preferences, opinions, or feelings.
    - If you genuinely struggle with accountability that’s been brought to you (by the leader or a peer), you must proactively and respectfully request another church leader/elder be involved to validate or correct the situation. Each person must honor the counsel of the more mature believers.
  + Part of discipleship accountability is seeking the wisdom and insight of the leader in any major decisions in your life. God’s word makes clear that the counsel of wise, godly people is a must in this life we live. This means a disciple seeks the counsel of his leader in significant or life-altering options before deciding or becoming partial to a particular thing/route. This counsel is not only to be sought, but followed. If more counsel is preferred, a disciple should ask the leader to bring in other leaders/church elders.
* **Preparation & Attendance**
  + Be prepared for any meeting/discussion having read/listened to all the assigned materials with proper time to reflect on the material and possibly review it again if needed. Oftentimes, the study/prep is 1-4 hours per week.
  + Take notes and write down any questions you have about the assigned material so that you will be prepared to be an active participant in the discussion when we meet.
  + Discussion with the leader to understand the meeting times is needed. Oftentimes, the main discipleship meeting is 2-4 hours.
  + Regular, consistent attendance is required to Sunday mornings, MidWeek, and the required discipleship happenings (weekly meeting, fellowship times, and, if applicable, trips and conferences.)
    - Valid reasons to miss a meeting are:
      * contagious illness or too ill to go to work/function,
      * out of town,
      * at work,
      * or a unique situation you’ve communicated in advance to your discipleship leader for approval.
    - When you have to miss, noted as above, you are expected to insure you’ve spoken to the leader about it in advance.
  + When out of town family/friends plan to visit you, you are expected to inform them of your church and discipleship meeting commitments and inform them you will be keeping those commitments. If a unique situation comes up, speak to your leader in advance, as sometimes exceptions to this are in order.
* **Building Relationships:**
  + One of the main aspects of discipleship is growing in relational unity with the disciples close to you and the rest of the church. This means that we need to get to know others and build godly relationships. Realistically, this can’t happen if we only gather in our weekly meeting. We need to additionally spend quality time with others. This may take time to develop, and I fully understand that we’re all busy. But we must have and execute on a genuine desire to know and be known by the people in our church family, *especially those in our discipleship group.*
* **Unto Doing More Work of Ministry:**
  + Discipleship always has a goal of moving beyond one’s self. By entering into discipleship, you are affirming the biblical call to serve the church we are a part of and, when readied, more directly pour into others.
  + In most cases, discipleship takes one to four years to complete the main process. You need to be committed for that length of time and be willing to begin to pour into others during and after that time as leadership sees fit.
  + Sometimes (as we hope to do at our church) it is appropriate to send disciples out to plant other partner churches or participate in international missions/disciple-making. This would be a decision made in unity when it applies. But for the rest/majority, the expectation is that disciples that are made in our church plan to be a part of and minister in our church long term.

Our Lord Jesus has called His people to live a crucified life in the here and now. This crucified life is counter-cultural, often difficult, but glorious and joy-filled if our treasure is Christ.

This intro information is very important. It basically unpacked the majority of the answer to our question tonight and really lays the expectation and clarity out for those who are needing to be discipled.

It may seem like there is a lot, and it is because the commitment is serious and costly. The payoff is so worth the commitment, though!

Now before we finish, I want to look at a few more passages that give clarity to how we do discipleship:

**2 Timothy 2:2** (NASB) The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**Titus 2:3-5** Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

**2 Timothy 2:24-26** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

**1 Peter 3:15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

**Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Proverbs 15:32** Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

**Ecclesiastes 7:5** It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.

**Proverbs 27:6** Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

**2 Timothy 4:2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

As we’ve seen in these passages and elsewhere tonight, God calls us to be growing as a Christian through the means of one-another. In these passages, we see a variety of discipleship situations. Discipleship can have different levels of depth and intensity, but all of us have a call to be involved in it. Live in it, enjoy it, and seek more focused opportunities to do it.

What I outlined earlier from our other resources is the picture of full New Testament discipleship. When full New Testament discipleship is happening, it often takes 2-5 years to be readied and to be able to send out the disciples to duplicate what you’ve done. The process is important enough to not rush for those who take longer to grow.

Church, each of us have unique lives, but the command of our Lord Jesus is to be in discipleship. If you’re still breathing, He’s calling you to discipleship. Continue to lean in and grow and consider the ways to increasingly fulfil this command. As more disciple-makers are readied, we’ll be able to do this better and better. It’s a joy to truly live for King Jesus.

Let’s pray.