Section: Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

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**TEACHING NOTES**

We learned two lessons ago what the Universal Church is. Tonight, we will focus briefly on how the members of the universal Church, all true believers, are to live in this world. Then we will dig into the great commission God has commanded upon all of us. We will be covering 3 questions from our catechism tonight so let’s pray and then we’ll dive in!

Pray:

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

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

There are three very important markers for 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.

**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 worldly success, 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 ongoing and ultimate aim in all that we do must be the aim of God’s glory.

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 realize this must be the marker of your life? Are you a Christian? Then you are to be a faithful and active worshiper of Christ Jesus! Is that how you live? Is that what people say about you? Is that what you are known for? Do people see 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….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 worshipers of Jesus. We should be known for our joy in Him, our praise of Him, our understanding of Him, our proclamation of Him, and 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 of God is *the goal and the fuel* of discipleship.

Our worship of Jesus feeds our discipleship. The prerequisite of being a true 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 Messiah is not heard and believed.

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 people groups of the world, making them worshipers of Christ.

Because we who have been given saving faith have tasted the joy of worshiping Jesus, we should want to share in this joy with others in our path as we live in this world.

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 proclaiming the gospel, but they don’t do the ever-important work of discipleship.

Due in part to bad theology and in part to failed discipleship of the previous leaders, this is one of the modern church growth era’s fallouts. In certain churches still today and many during a past era in history, pastors were consumed primarily with getting people in the door and focusing on a profession of faith, *but not the building up of the flock for the life and ministry that the Lord commands*. That’s like seeing a baby being born and then leaving it on the curb. Emotional and excited 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, one to another, on and on.

What you will see in proper discipleship is a replica of the discipler. If discipleship is done properly the person or people being discipled will look like the person discipling them in the ways that person looks like Christ Jesus. For clarities sake, we who disciple others are striving to be imitators of Christ ourselves. We are striving toward full maturity in Christ and living a life that is worthy of imitation. This does not mean we look the same talk the same walk the same. Rather this means we hold to the same biblical truth and worldview and in light of that we strive in unity to honor God in all that we do.

Church, discipleship is so critical. True discipleship. Biblical discipleship. That’s what we need to know, seek, and do. Let’s jump into 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.

Let’s look at the main verse for discipleship; this is the passage 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.”**

After Jesus had resurrected and prior to Him ascending back into heaven, He meets with His disciples and gives them a final charge—a life-defining commission for His followers. 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.”

See with me that all believers are disciples and are called to make disciples. Scripture makes that clear. **But we need to realize that a person can only disciple another to the degree they have been discipled**. That should lead a person to ask, ‘then how do we honor the Great Commission? How does this discipleship happen.”

Let’s pull in now our other catechism question for tonight so as we continue in our study, we have it in view as well.

**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:** The process of following and learning from more mature Christians and doing the work of disciple-making ourselves: calling people to saving faith, then training them in sound doctrine and how to live as imitators of Christ.

See Matthew 28 again, it’s so important:

**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. Discipleships must be done in Him and through Him; we are desperate for His work, and it must be for Him and 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.

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. 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 God’s Word.

Therefore, discipleship requires you to trust the person and leadership as they point you to God’s word in the various forms of discipleship offered. See God’s call on Christians to have a humility that receives counsel, leading, and correction well:

**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.

Brothers and sisters…. Christ’s sheep are to be humble, seeking wisdom, instruction, and correction from those equipped to point us to God’s word. We are blessed when we agree with God on these things and live it out.

And consider that those leading others in discipleship must have first properly been discipled themselves. Jesus is not giving this command to a few dudes He just pulled off fishing boats yesterday. Remember that Jesus had been walking with those in His discipleship for several years—teaching and training them to go and do likewise. He is giving this command to those that have been trained to carry out the task with the clear implication that the task is carried out in the same way over and over.

**Overview and Vision:**

In light of Christ’s design of replication and duplication, we should note that the New Testament model of Christian discipleship is much different than what many have done in recent years. The discipleship we seek to do is not simply your common day monthly men’s breakfast group or limited interaction “accountability partner.” Rather, we must seek to follow the model that Christ established, which is the same model we see the Apostle Paul (and others) emulate.

It should be clear to us by now that 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.

I pray you see this point clearly; discipleship is about conforming to Christ. It is of great benefit to us as Christians and we really desire all who are with us to be pursuing this in one way or another.

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

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, “I have authority over everything; since that is the case, you need to go, I call you 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 believe 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 be marked with diligence in the duty and comfort of Him?

Discipleship is one of if not the main way that God causes us to grow in Christlikeness.

Now to be clear discipleship will cost you. It requires humility and it will cost you temporary things. It requires you to be truly known (which if you’ve gone here with genuine believers, you know this isn’t actually a cost but a freedom in Christ!) It will most likely cost you many idols that you have set up in your life. But all the things it will cost are worth giving up for Jesus and your true joy in Him.

**Luke 14:25-33 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 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? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ 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? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 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 (at least the traditional American view of retirement), comfort, family, toys, and wealth, but what do you get in return?

You get the joy and fruit of obedience to 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 in committed and pursuing intentional layers of further discipleship?

Jesus said in John **14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”**

If Jesus is your highest love, then you will obey His commandment no matter the cost. The implications of this passage are huge!

The reality is that unless you see Jesus as supremely valuable above all other things and unless you see that being discipled unto further maturity brings you into a heightened sense and enjoyment of your communion with Jesus then you will never trade temporary things for this commitment to discipleship. You really do have to ask yourself what you love more, is it Jesus and His commands or other things you want and enjoy?

If you truly love Jesus, does it mean you’ll have to turn from idols (some you’ve had for many 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 church because what you gain in Jesus is worth losing everything else for. Obedience to Jesus’s command—experiencing life in Jesus properly—is most certainly worth anything you may have to give up.

Just listen again with fresh ears to what the Apostle Paul says about this:

**Philippians 1:20-21 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. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

**Philippians 3:7-11 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 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 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- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 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. The fruit of obedience, the closeness of communion with God in this, is absolutely worth anything you may have to give up.

So, with that foundation, we must ask, what does biblical discipleship look like? How do we do discipleship together?

To that, let’s realize that God’s word contains the overall command to do it, and many specifics of what it includes and looks like, while leaving some style and minutia details unspecified so long as the biblical commands are honored and followed. That means that it does not look the exact same for everyone all the time. How a church in Bakersfield does discipleship in 2025 and an underground church in China in 1980 did discipleship will have core, critical points of similarity, but there are also understandable practical differences in the how and when. Likewise, a man aspiring to be an elder, being discipled by a church leader compared to discipled woman being discipled by a more mature woman will have core, critical points of similarity, while also having practical differences in how and when it’s done.

But in any case: Discipleship **is** a willingness to prioritize one’s life to being taught and mentored and trained up to be more like Christ.

So how is Disciples Church seeking to honor God’s command in discipleship for God’s glory and other’s good? Well, in our membership class the elders outline some details of discipleship and how we do that here. I think it’d be helpful to consider that outline in our lesson here. If you’ve recently gone through that some of this should sound familiar to you.

At Disciples Church, discipleship generally happens in four ways or layers.

The first layer is a critical foundation...

* **Sunday Worship**

Sunday worship is a significant catalyst and undergirding in discipleship.

Sunday worship is the most primary way that we gather as the body of Christ to be equipped by our shepherds in the teaching of God’s word, in fellowship, in celebrating the Lord’s Supper and Baptism.

**Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

**Ephesians 4:11-14 11And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

**Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.**

We all must have a biblical view of and commitment to the corporate gathering of the church. Keeping this commitment often takes adjusting family plans, weekend work duties, and so on, to make it a priority to be together Sunday, consistently.

Regarding discipleship, it is important that you see that to some degree, every committed person who attends Sunday worship faithfully is being discipled. They are being taught, trained, and reoriented to Christ to become more like Christ, to fight sin, and to worship God with all their lives.

Sunday worship alone does lack some of the deeper life-on-life that God has called us all to, but nonetheless, growth does happen.

Let’s use an illustration through this discipleship walkthrough.

If a person wants to be a medic, they have many layers available for being rightly trained as a medic.

This first layer of discipleship (Corporate Sunday Worship) would be like this person watching teachings in a class setting

These teachings walk through the medic’s books and give practical takeaways for the person to know more and begin to practice things. This is very helpful to their process of growing. It’s accessible, it’s consistent, it’s focused, and it does provide real growth opportunity.

**However it does lack other needed elements** that would propel this person.

Likewise, it is insufficient to only attend Sunday Worship faithfully ***if*** one longs to ***more fully*** become a faithful and mature disciple of Jesus. Life together in the other forms we are about to talk about is needed. Intentional life together is what God’s word models and calls us to.

But…. we want you to see this corporate gathering of the church is a part of discipleship and those who are not yet involved in group life are not outside of discipleship; They are just in first layer and missing the fuller meat of what discipleship can be.

And for clarities sake; one’s Bible study and prayer are a part of daily worship that are also a foundational practice and part of being a disciple of Christ. This is something our reading plan helps with or any other sound study that you may do.

However, the best growth and the best investment in discipleship, per God’s design, needs deeper COMMUNITY. This is why we stress “growing within community” here.

The next three layers of discipleship are the three ways this fuller *community discipleship* happens here at Disciples Church, let’s look at these:

1. **Midweek Gathering:**

The focus of Midweek is to abide in Christ and His word corporately (together) through sound teaching and organized community.

Midweek groups are a next step for people to be known, loved, challenged, and led.

The design is for group members to grow in knowledge and community, be known by the leader and others.

It is key that what is being taught is biblically sound and that our leading of our group’s discussions is biblically sound. This is why we are careful about who is on the teaching team and have a careful and thorough process of proofing the lessons that we do.

It is why we are also careful with who is leading midweek groups and need the leaders on the same page with us.

For those who are a part of midweek, or will be in the future:

* It’s important that you don’t just see your table group leader as a facilitator of discussion **but someone you are truly seeking and submitting to be led by**. Showing respect and following them is a large part of how you are being discipled at this stage.

Midweek is the second layer of discipleship (the first layer of community discipleship)—that is a very important layer.

Midweek discipleship is a classroom type learning process and a *discussion-based interaction*.

* Back to our Illustration: If Sunday Corporate Worship is like watching medic teachings but still processing and applying it outside of life-on-life contexts, then Midweek is taking the onsite class with qualified teachers *that has group breakout sessions and such*. It is more hands-on with what is being learned than the *viewer-only* layer.

In this a person begins to be known by the instructor and peers…but it’s still not *super* deep in *life-on-life* application.

Christians it is good for us to desire *life-on-life* discipleship! You don’t have to take my word for it though, look at Scripture, see honestly that these next commands from God are most applicable to those *intentionally in life together*, seeking to grow in Christ *in 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.**

That’s a Clear command for intentional teaching and shaping unto the students doing likewise, on and on. Discipleship unto discipleship. Very clear.

**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.**

Ladies teaching ladies—very clear…. intentional life on life teaching and shaping. A direct call on Christian women to Discipleship. Intentionally in life together, seeking to grow in Christ together.

See also:

**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 ...**

All these things require doing life together…knowing one another…basing everything on God’s word.

These things don’t happen to the degree that God has designed if Jesus’s flock is limiting themselves from more diligent life-on-life discipleship to walk with more mature Christians.

In light of that, we get to what we call Further Growth Discipleship.

1. **Further Growth Discipleship**

The next layer of discipleship at Disciples Church moves into **increased focus and increased personal interaction and application**.

In seeking even more biblical knowledge and sanctification/maturity, increased study and accountability typically happens with a smaller group that is interested in devoting *additional* time. This is a walking together in the context of meeting (in addition to MidWeek) with a leader personally or in a small group.

While fellowship is increased here, these are not simply social times together; rather, there is an intentional purpose to seek Christian growth and be even more accountable to mature Christians in this increased discipleship.

This layer of discipleship must be fully based on and faithful in God’s Scripture. This layer includes Bible study using various resources.

This Further Growth Discipleship is for those interested and able to go deeper (those who are genuinely **seeking** “further growth”)—there is a commitment to additional time to study and growing with a leader. This is likely an additional weekly time together to study a book or topic in which the person or smaller group needs to be growing.

And, this is more than the MidWeek discussion layer—you have more time to really dig in and focus more carefully on growth.

In regard to these Further Growth Discipleship times, the intention is that they are set for a particular season or length. They serve a purpose for a time and then finish. They may be an 8 week study through one book, several months to cover a few books and topics, or even a few years…..but the particular commitment of a disciple to a leader in this does not continue forever *in this way*.

Let me be clear, when a Further Growth Discipleship session or season concludes you are not done being discipled. You are still a part of a Midweek group and hopefully still looking for ways to be increasingly known and accountable and to grow in Christ.

Now, Further Growth Discipleship happens in many different ways at the church. The goal is not for these discipleship situations to all look the same, but rather, for discipleship to be intentional in that a leader is looking to help those under their teaching and care grow in specific ways. There is real variety in how this happens throughout the church.

The duration of each Further Growth Discipleship depends primarily on two things, 1) the *disciple-maker’s* time, ability, and vision for it, and 2) the *disciple’s* willingness **and ability (such as time, etc)** to follow the lead of the disciple-maker.

Further Growth Discipleship aims to produce growth in such a way that the goal of moving beyond oneself is increasingly actualized over time, so that a disciple becomes readied to pour into others in disciple-making to the degree they have been discipled themselves.

Theses study group discipleships are certainly happening at DC…some of the midweek table leaders lead groups like these, for example.

In many churches, these things are limited to only the elders or preaching pastor being equipped to lead this kind of discipleship. But that should not be the case. Members should be trained up over time to be able to disciple in this way. That is a biblical passion of ours. And praise God, He has done a great work in that: We have a very solid group of disciple-makers trained to this degree and it is awesome to see God’s design go forth. Rejoice with us that our church is working hard to make disciples who make disciples. All glory to God.

* Back to our Illustration: If Midweek is taking the onsite class and having breakout sessions—then Further Growth Discipleship is more of a one-on-one or smaller extra class. It’s the instructor working *with you personally*…honing skills, growing in knowledge, and being much more known/transparent/accountable. It is regular personal attention from the trained medic.

1. **Leadership Discipleship**

The fullest layer of discipleship seeks to ready individuals for *certain roles of leadership* in God’s church—roles such as: group leading, formal teaching, leadership disciple-making, church planting, missionary work, eldership, etcetera.

In Leadership Discipleship, the goal is to emulate the New Testament model of discipleship as much as possible. Think about the kind of relationship Jesus had with the 12 disciples or that Paul had with his ministry training disciples.

The Leadership Discipleship process includes committing to the highest level of authenticity, dedication, study, and accountability. This is for those who have real availability, commitment, and show important prerequisite qualities. This layer/option of discipleship is not for everyone, but we’re committed to doing it with those who are ready for it and longing for it. To be clear: No one is required to be in Leadership Discipleship. It’s something available, not something required.

This discipleship is designed to have the most impact on biblical understanding and sanctification/maturity. Leadership Discipleship consists of the one longing to be discipled fully and faithfully submitting themselves to the biblical life-coaching and mentorship of the disciple-maker. Leadership Discipleship is where we see our greatest growth, but it requires the greatest investment of time, study, and submission.

Again, and even more so, this layer of discipleship must be fully based on and faithful in God’s Scripture. There is increased focused interaction between the disciple and the disciple-maker, an increased amount of time spent in study, and an increased amount of accountability.

Leadership Discipleship prepares a believer for and produces growth in such a way that the goal of moving beyond oneself is **certainly** actualized over time, whereby a discipled person is readied to more directly pour into others in disciple-making in further layers and is diligent to do so when the elders commission them to.

Here at DC, in this LEADERSHIP layer, some of your table leaders have been discipled.

This type of discipleship usually takes several years to fully run its course.

And those discipled in this way (like in the other ways), are still to be in discipleship in the way that they are continually accountable to mature believers and growing.

None of us, none of the elders, none of your favorite Christians here or elsewhere ever get to full conformity to Christ in this first creation, therefore **all** Christians must continue in accountability and seeking growth. No one is ever beyond these things. **How the process looks *does change* but being discipled in the Lord doesn’t stop in this life.**

So, let’s consider our illustration again…

Illustration: The Leadership disciple is not necessarily the most naturally talented in the class, but they have important quality traits and they are devoted students, good listener, and good follower. This is the person who seeks out the expert medic and says, “Train me, I want to shadow you and be trained to be like you.” This leadership layer is one where the student gives full respect and functional submission to the leader.

Think of how things worked with Christ or the Apostle Paul…those following them had to be all in and fulling willing to be led.

An important thing to remember is, all believers are disciples and are called to make disciples. Matthew 28 makes that clear. **But we need to realize that a person can only disciple another to the degree they have been discipled**. A person can only give what they have.

So, let’s recap this and consider it from Scripture’s example of Jesus.

Here at the church, we have several layers at which people are being discipled. Which layer is best for each person depends on many factors, a key one being their readiness and ability to commit.

And we see this in Scripture…

Jesus had many kinds of disciples (many followers).

Some in the larger crowds were called disciples, they gathered to listen to his sermons,

Then there was a smaller group who was near and heard more of the discussions and nuances of His teachings and even ran with the twelve disciples to some level.

Then there were closer disciples--the faithful inner circle who was trained to eventually be the Apostles who would go out and live up to the expectations of the full process.

So, all of us believers are certainly disciples of Jesus. Since you participate in Sunday worship, and for you in the room here, also Midweek, you are actively *being discipled*.

Lord willing, over time and with a proven readiness, more people from this room will begin some of the life-on-life further layers of discipleship, as seen in Scripture.

We do not force anyone to be discipled at those latter layers…far from it. It comes naturally. You’re flourishing and growing, and eventually, likely looking for it—all the while, since you’re known and around long enough, your group leader and the elders are seeing the same trajectory for you.

Praise God for all the discipleship that is happening in this local church! Praise God for giving us elders that want to honor King Jesus in these things—they create opportunities, and they desire and encourage the members of this church in discipleship!

Praise God that there are real ways you can grow accordingly in discipleship here.

If you are looking for leadership training, we are active in providing it. If you’re not, then you can joyfully know that you’re in a church that does invest in it for those who are. I want each of you to know that we take God’s call of discipleship seriously and do our best to live it out for His glory and the good of His people.

As we’ve seen in Scripture tonight, God calls us to be growing as a Christian through the means of one-another—through Christian discipleship. In Scripture, 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.

Church, I cannot tell you how many brothers and sisters in Christ that I’ve spoken with over the years who upon seeing scripture rightly and plugging into a solid church have this common regret: I wish I had known and been pursuing these things more diligently.

This was my regret as well when I began to see Gods truth and grow as a Christian for the first time in my life. I was raised in the church; I grew up hearing stories and being taught about God but it was for the most part shallow or unfortunately at times incorrect. I am thankful for the faithful people who taught me in my youth even when they were unintentionally doing it in these ways. I do not believe there was a purposeful desire from them to do this, however what I realize after many years is that there was a lack of discipleship that led many to these positions.

We long for you to rightly know God and His word, to rightly grow and conform to Christ and to be able to stand with Paul and tell those who have been entrusted to your care and discipleship that you did not shy away from teaching the full council of the Lord. We long for you to not grow old and regretfully look back on years that were not devoted to growing in this way.

Church lets strive together to honor the command of our Lord Jesus to be in discipleship. For whatever days God has given each of us; lets grow, be trained as a disciple of Jesus, and let’s teach others to do so as well. Continue to lean in and grow and consider the ways to increasingly fulfil this command. As more disciple-makers are ready, we’ll be able to do this better and better. It’s a joy to truly live for King Jesus.

Let’s pray.