

LESSON ESSENTIALS

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 2: BIBLICAL CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES

If you have experienced the great excitement of leading someone to Christ, then you are likely highly motivated to continue sharing the Gospel and to continue working to lead others to Him as well. Certainly we are called to preach the Good News! But is that all? Do we have an ongoing responsibility to those new believers? And if so, what does it look like?

After the thrill of leading someone to Christ, we may forget that there is more work to do. We are called to develop ongoing relationships with these new believers, helping them come to know Christ in a deeper and more mature way. This is called discipleship. It is a critical, but often ignored, aspect to the Christian life. Read on to catch the vision for making disciples.

If you are wondering who to disciple, you just need to look to those nearest to you. The most obvious person to work with is the new believer that you shared the Gospel with. If you have led someone to Christ, then you ought to seek out opportunities to follow-up with them and begin a mentoring relationship.

When we speak of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), we often think of it as evangelism -- sharing the Gospel and making sure that all nations hear about Jesus and come to entrust their lives to Him. Certainly, seeing people come to a saving knowledge of Christ is of the utmost importance and we ought to be diligent in our evangelism. However, the Great Commission clearly speak to the need for discipleship as well.

Let's look at this passage again: "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.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

God's Word is clear: we are to make disciples, that is, we are to teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded. This may feel overwhelming to you. Immediately, you may have two concerns come to mind: You may wonder who you ought to disciple, and you may wonder how you ought to disciple someone. But discipleship doesn't always need to be formal or complicated!

If you are wondering who to disciple, you just need to look to those nearest to you. The most obvious person to work with is the new believer that you shared the Gospel with. If you have led someone to Christ, then you ought to seek out opportunities to follow-up with them and begin a mentoring relationship.

But even those of us who have not recently led someone to Christ need to obey the call to make disciples. Look at the people closest to you: do you have children that need to be discipled? Are there new Christians in your church or small group who don't have a mentor? What about a neighbour or a co-worker who believes in the Lord, but doesn't have anyone to teach them? The Lord puts us in relationships and in communities so that we can be an encouragement and example to one another. It could be that there is someone very near to you already who needs a mentor. Ask the Lord to help you initiate that relationship.

When we consider how to disciple, we may argue that we are ill-equipped because we are not trained in Bible teaching. However, Deuteronomy speaks to parents about what discipleship looks like in families. And when we compare that model to how Jesus taught His disciples, we learn an excellent framework for the discipleship relationships that we undertake.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

In this passage, we see that the teaching of the Lord’s commandments comes in everyday life. This is not an example of a formal Bible study, but just living life together and talking through the commandments as you experience the day together. Jesus also just spent time with His disciples, serving together, talking together, and using everyday life as object lessons for teaching the ways of the Lord. The disciples watched how He interacted compassionately with people, how He loved His enemies, how He responded to critics, how He laid down His life, and more. He taught them how to live by showing them how He lived. Obviously, Jesus also spent time teaching more formally in the temple, but the majority of His teaching His disciples happened during the time spent together doing very normal things.

As you begin a discipleship relationship, you will need to be intentional about working teaching into your time together, but it need not always be sitting down formally over a Bible study. It will be very worthwhile, for both you and the new believer, to plan times of ‘doing life’ together. Invite your friend to join you in a service opportunity. Have your friend into your home for a meal and to see how a Christian family functions. While you are spending time together, be sure to talk about why you do things the way you do, and how you make the decisions you make. Teaching what the commandments of Jesus are is important, but it is not enough. It is critical that you also model how to follow the commands of Jesus in real life. Taking time to explain your thought process and your reason for doing what you do during your day is incredibly important and beneficial to a new believer who is trying to figure out what the Christian life truly looks like.

Discipleship takes time, but the fruit of that labour is exceptionally rewarding. Seeing someone come to Christ through evangelism is very exciting, but seeing someone mature in faith through discipleship is even more of a blessing. By investing in discipleship, you are following the call to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ in an exponential way. You will have borne fruit in your disciple’s life, but

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more importantly you will have been used of by the Lord to enable them to also go forth and make more disciples, who will go on to make still more disciples! What a thrill to be part of the expansion of the Kingdom of God! What a privilege to be used by God in His purposes!

IN REVIEW

- Discipleship is as necessary as evangelism and we ought to get excited to participate in both.
- Discipleship does not always need to be seen as formal teaching or Bible study; in fact, living life and modelling a Christian walk in the daily details is a critical part of true discipleship.
- When we take a long-term view of discipleship, we will see how investing time in one person bears fruit in so very many! There is exponential growth to be made through discipleship as we all take seriously the call to 'be fruitful and multiply' through the mentoring of others.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Take time to pray and ask the Lord to show you who He wants for you to build a discipleship relationship with. Write down some names that come to mind.

- Think of ways that you could include that person into your everyday life. Is there a night that they could come to your home for a meal? Is there a service opportunity that they could help you with? Make a plan that involves them and then invite them to join you.

- Think about the mentoring you've received (and likely are still receiving): what have been the most impactful parts of the teaching you've received? Have you benefitted from both Bible study and daily living examples? If so, thank your mentor for their investment in your life, and then earnestly seek for ways to have that impact on someone else's life.

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