

LESSON ESSENTIALS

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 8: THE DISCIPLESHIP CYCLE

When it comes to the Kingdom of God, there is a lot of work to be done. From evangelism, to discipleship, and from teaching, to serving, there are many roles to be filled and the Church needs to work together to accomplish all that the Lord has planned for His people. Are you ready and willing to do your part? Do you feel equipped to take on the roles that God has assigned to you?

Oftentimes when the opportunity to serve the Lord comes to us we shy away from the responsibility saying that we aren't good enough, smart enough, or brave enough to do what needs to be done. It is easier to hope that someone else will step in and do the work of the Lord. Is this humility? Or is this fear? Is sitting out and just watching really an option for a Christian?

Indeed, that is the key to our readiness to lead: trusting that Christ will enable us.

Discipleship is a lifelong process. Becoming like Christ takes time. Whether you call it 'progressive sanctification' or 'growing in grace' it does not happen overnight. If you are looking to 'measure' how far along you might be in your journey, you can consider the "Discipleship Cycle."

If you are new to the faith, the thought of teaching and leading may be overwhelming. You may feel thoroughly unequipped and unprepared to take on any responsibilities in the Church. That is understandable. Certainly, as with any new experience, there is learning, training, and maturing that needs to take place in order for us to serve well. We need to be sure that we have enough Biblical maturity that we are not poorly representing Christ, or misinterpreting the truths of the Word. However, none of us will ever attain to the perfect level of readiness this side of Heaven, and so we need to, at some point, take the leap into leadership trusting that the Lord will enable us as He sees fit.

Indeed, that is the key to our readiness to lead: trusting that Christ will enable us. Some people's personalities are such that they naturally seek out leadership roles, in business for example. So when they come to faith in Jesus Christ, they naturally tend towards leadership roles in the church as they grow in maturity. Other personalities will balk at the invitation to lead. There may be insecurities and fear, perfectionism, laziness, or other factors behind their hesitancy to lead. In both of these personalities, there could be a reliance on self as opposed to a dependence upon the Lord. A person might say, "I can definitely do this!" or they may say, "I'll never be able to do that!" Both responses come out of a focus on their perception of their own level of ability.

But the Word tells us that our confidence to lead comes through the Lord. "I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me," Philippians 4:13 reminds us. If the Lord calls you into leadership, He will equip you to do it, no matter where you find yourself in the journey of Christian maturity and discipleship.

Discipleship is a lifelong process. Becoming like Christ takes time. Whether you call it 'progressive sanctification' or 'growing in grace' it does not happen overnight. If you are looking to 'measure' how far along you might be in your journey, you can consider the "Discipleship Cycle." The stages of the cycle are:

1. Pre-evangelism
2. Evangelism
3. Christian Foundations
4. Growth and Service
5. Spiritual Leadership

This is a fluid cycle where the stages often overlap. There is no timeframe on this: some will move quite quickly from just hearing

about Jesus for the first time into taking on leadership roles. Everyone's journey will have a slightly different timeline. However, no matter where you are on your journey, you are called to serve. Just as plants that begin to grow in the soil will each grow at different rates, they may produce leaves and fruit at a young stage and continue to grow.

Jesus told His disciples of the great need for workers. In Luke 10: 1-2 we read: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" Even after sending out 72 workers, the Lord said there were too few laborers. When the Lord reveals the need for servants to you, and when He shows you a role that needs filling, we ought to trust Him for the skill, wisdom, compassion, and energy to do the work He is calling us to do, no matter how ready we feel.

Spend the rest of your time now reading and praying through these passages which encourage us to serve and to lead in His strength. And then take up the call to humbly serve your Lord with the strength that He provides.

- [Philippians 2:13](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#):
- [2 Peter 1:3](#):
- [Philippians 4:13](#):
- [Ephesians 2:8-10](#)

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.

The 5 stages of the Discipleship Cycle are:

- **Pre-evangelism**
- **Evangelism**
- **Christian Foundations**
- **Growth and Service**
- **Spiritual Leadership**

IN REVIEW

- There is much work to be done in God's Kingdom – evangelism, discipleship and serving cannot wait until each of us feels ready!
- We will not be perfect or acquire all knowledge while we are still alive, so we must trust God to teach us and give us wisdom as we serve Him imperfectly.
- The 5 stages of the Discipleship Cycle are: Pre-evangelism, Evangelism, Christian Foundations, Growth and Service, Spiritual Leadership
- No matter where you are in your faith, you are called to serve God!

HAVE YOUR SAY

- What can you do to advance in your discipleship? According to the framework we have looked at today, what do you need to learn next? What do you need to practise? Who can you find to help you?

- What is God calling you to do to serve Him today?

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