



THE DISCIPLE'S CALLING

By Dave Currie,
Pastor of Discipleship
& Body Life Ministries

After Jesus Christ's death on the cross, He was buried and then resurrected on the third day. Before He ascended into heaven, He appeared to His disciples in Galilee and gave them these instructions:

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, ESV

Dave Currie

The Disciple's Calling

Discipleship is a big word that can often be confusing. Furthermore, the disciplines and actions of a disciple need some clarification. It is my hope that through this short document, a better understanding and, in turn, better actions will be furthered.

Very simply, a disciple is a follower of Jesus. I like how Crawford Loritts, nationally-known Bible speaker and author, described a disciple as someone who has a “dynamic identification with Jesus.” This includes being an active learner. Teaching and right thinking, especially when it comes to God and His gospel, must be accurate. As A.W. Tozer said, “What we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Therefore, what a disciple learns and believes is crucial to how he/she lives. The Bible is the number one resource. Getting to know the real Jesus, as communicated to us in the scriptures, is the non-negotiable beginning, middle, and end (goal) of following Christ.

Following Christ has two main parts to it. The first is being a disciple (identity). Being a disciple is summed up in the phrase “growing in discipleship.” The second part is what a disciple does or the actions of a disciple. The actions of a disciple are captured in the compound term “disciple-making.” So being a disciple is both inward (discipleship) and outward (disciple-making).

Being a Disciple

Being a disciple has to do with becoming more like Christ as we follow Him. We must see God, ourselves, and the world from Jesus' perspective. God's truth should be the grid and filter through which we think. Reading and studying the Scriptures is indispensable for this to happen.

Much has been said and written regarding the importance of having a **Christian worldview**. I cannot emphasize enough how crucial this is. How we think and believe as disciples will impact positively or negatively how we live (Rom. 12:2).

Therefore, a disciple must be thinking and seeing the world and its issues as Jesus does (Col. 3:1-2). The Scriptures are our authority and guide. We must never make them conform to the culture and fall into sin by shaping God and His Word into our own image.

Our souls must be renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit throughout our lives. When we spend time in the Spirit-inspired scriptures, God changes us. He also changes us through the Spirit's work in our lives. Our lives can be called "God's classroom." He uses circumstances, people and sometimes even trials to further grow us and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

In **John 15** Jesus explains a crucial dynamic of the Christian life. He uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches. In order for the branches (disciples) to bear fruit, they must remain in the vine (Jesus) and the gardener (God the Father). It is God's will for us to bear fruit. This abiding or connection to the vine is fortified through spiritual disciplines.

Being in **community** is an important part of being a disciple. Following Christ was never meant to be something we do in isolation. The body of Christ is about having mutually beneficial relationships (1 Cor. 12). One way that we reflect the image of God is by being in relationships. In the very God-head, there is a community of relationships. God created us to be in community, especially the community of the **church** (Hebrews 10:25).

Spiritual disciplines are the ways that we avail ourselves of God's resources for nourishment for our souls and life transformation. Spiritual disciplines are things like (but not limited to): Scripture reading, scripture meditation, scripture memorization, prayer, serving, giving, compassion to those less fortunate, fasting etc. (Phil. 3:10-14).

What are called "**retreats**" are special times to pull away from the normal day-to-day and spend some concentrated time with God, to have a unique time of having your soul fed. It is good for a disciple of Christ to do this. God may have something special for you. Our world is

filled with too much noise. Distractions are often one of the enemies of making progress in following Christ.

Sometimes in the life of a disciple a person may need **counseling**. The goal is to bring healing and growth to help a person go further in their following of Christ. The Holy Spirit uses specific people in the body of Christ and His Word to bring the truth to bear in these sensitive areas (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

Granted, spiritual disciplines are things a disciple does and are actions themselves; but they are not the finished goal of the Great Commission. The goal of the Great Commission is disciple-making (Matt. 28:18-20). It is to this that we need to now focus. Disciple-making is the goal action for the life of a disciple.

Disciple-making

Right action results from right thinking. The above section of being a disciple has to be the foundation for **disciple-making**. What God does in our lives is not isolated to just us. Disciple-making is the calling and ministry of a disciple toward others. Our God is a missional God and, therefore, disciples of Jesus must be missional disciples.

The goal of disciple-making is for those disciples to then, in turn, make other disciples. Through this process, more people become followers of Christ, and the world is changed one life at a time. It is interesting that the literal meaning of “go” in the Great Commission means – as you are going – go. Often we don’t think of our routines of life and the people we often see as the very people God may have us to extend ministry. We enter our mission field every day. God calls some individuals into ministry as pastors or missionaries (Eph. 4:11), but make no mistake – all Christ followers are called to ministry.

Evangelism is the entry point for a disciple in beginning their life with Christ. It is only when a person places their trust (faith) in Christ that they are saved and in union with Christ. This is the “front door” of life as a disciple. Don’t forget that someone shared Christ with you. You also need to share Christ with someone else. How tragic it would be for

a believer to never share Jesus with anyone else. Evangelism is one of the most exciting things in which you can be engaged. It is part of the adventure of following Christ. Boredom in the Christian life results from a person not being obedient to the Great Commission.

Interestingly enough, the process of being a disciple has a pre-evangelistic element to it. That has to do with what God is doing before a person becomes a Christian. The Bible tells us that God draws people to Himself (John 6:44). A person in this stage is somewhat open to the person and message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is at work convicting people of sin and righteousness (John 16:8). The Gospel call goes forth inviting people to come to Jesus. God is always the initiator (John 5:17).

Evangelism is obviously part of disciple-making. Disciples can't be made without it. The key in thinking as a disciple-maker is not to think that evangelism is the end of making a disciple. New disciples must be taught, mentored, and ministered to in other areas of need.

Sometimes, due to their life before Christ, there is a carry-over of consequences of sin. There can be deficiencies in their basic maturity regarding life skills. Or, there can be lifestyle issues that require special attention.

Suggestions:

Disciple-makers can be involved in the following ways, as the Lord leads:

- 1) Teach: Kids, youth, adults.
- 2) Mentor someone that God may have "put on your radar" as you are engaged in ministry.
- 3) Share Christ with someone. Get to know a neighbor, co-worker etc.
- 4) Reach out to international students. The foreign mission field has come to the United States.
- 5) Be a life group leader.
- 6) Be a tutor in the Tutoring Club ministry.
- 7) Be a leader in the CrossPoint sports ministry.
- 8) Be an AWANA clubs ministry leader.
- 9) Get involved in jail ministry.

- 10) Volunteer at a local crisis pregnancy care center.
- 11) Start a Bible study at your work.
- 12) Meet with and be prayer partners with a younger person.
- 13) Invite someone to a church event and then meet with them for coffee – cultivate the relationship.
- 14) Go on a short-term mission's trip.
- 15) Be a foster parent.
- 16) Adopt a child.
- 17) Be creative; you are not limited to the above list.

Intentionality is a key part of engaging in disciple-making. Jesus said, "Go." If you wait around to start the process of disciple-making, chances are it won't happen. Prayer is a key starting point, but then, get going. Spiritual laziness is real. Allowing other things to get in the way of God's plan for your life can be a real problem as well (Heb. 12:1-3).

It is no mistake that Jesus said that we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). The downward pull of the sin nature is always toward self. Jesus calls us away from this default orientation. There is no way a person can be Great Commission-minded when their life is always self-indulgent. When Jesus calls us to follow him there is always more. It may be necessary to get alone with God, with no distractions, to ask Him to show you the key adjustments that may need to be made, or the things you need to be aware of to start living a disciple-making life.

A note to parents:

Disciple-making is also the commission of parents to their children. The ministries of the church are to supplement what is received from parents. Children need to see discipleship in their closest relationships.



3621 Samuelson Road
Rockford, Illinois 61109
815-874-6806

Pastor Dave's email: dave@mefc.us