

Maranatha Bible Church 2020
Equipping Hour: Proactive Discipleship
Week 2: Why should we disciple?

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1: What is proactive discipleship?

Week 2: Why should we disciple?

Week 3: What are some common excuses and barriers to discipleship?

Practical:

Week 4: Discipling the hurting.

Week 5: Discipleship and Accountability

Week 6: Dangers and Joys of discipleship

Introduction

This week we are going to focus on the *why* of discipleship. Discipleship is hard, nothing is guaranteed and you could potentially spend countless hours pouring into someone only to have them turn away from you or the faith all together. This has caused many in the church to maintain superficial relationships with people, never getting beyond the pleasantries of a surface based friendship.

From last week, we know that every Christian is called to a ministry of discipleship. Each of us should have someone who is discipling us *and* someone that we, in turn, are discipling. This can look different for each person. If you have a family, the husband/wife relationship should be one of discipleship. If you have kids, they too need to be disciplined by their parents. If you are single, you should be not only preparing yourself by proper reading and training, but also finding others to have a discipleship relationship with. The Bible speaks to every season of a believer's life and what responsibilities they have within the church.

Why should you disciple someone?

1) For your own joy

- a) Philippians 1:3-5 “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always *offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all*, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”
- b) Philippians 2:1-2 “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, *make my joy complete* by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”
- c) Philippians 4:1 “Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, *my joy and crown*, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”
- d) Romans 16:19 “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; *therefore I am rejoicing over you*, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.”
- e) 2 Corinthians 7:4 “Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; *I am overflowing with joy* in all our affliction.”
- f) 2 Corinthians 7:15-16 “His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. *I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.*”
- g) 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 “For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? *For you are our glory and joy.*”
- h) 2 John 1:4 “*I was very glad [joyful]* to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.”
- i) Paul and John were both filled with joy because they knew that God was doing a good work in the people who were in the churches.
 - i) Paul had personally done the work in Philippi, Thessalonica and in Corinth, but not in Rome. Even though he had yet to go to the church in Rome, he had heard about them and was full of joy because they were obedient to the gospel.
 - ii) Paul faced many hardships, but he could look at his fruit in others and rejoice knowing that the work he had done for the Lord was not in vain.
- j) It was not all joyous and fruitful work for Paul.
 - i) We sadly read about Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10 “*...for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica*; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.”
 - (1) Demas was once a fellow worker with Paul, Philemon 1:24 “*...as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.*”

(2) Paul had labored alongside this man, perhaps even given this man the gospel and disciplined him.

But, when Paul was facing his final days before Nero, Demas ran off...loving the world more than Christ.

(3) Not even the apostle Paul had a perfect record when it came to discipling.

k) We should not only have a desire to see others grow in the Lord but rejoice when they do. It is not selfish to desire to see someone grow in the Lord.

i) ***What about pride?*** Can we become prideful in our discipling? Of course!

(1) Just like *everything* we do, we can take it to the extreme, make it about ourselves and try and take credit for what the Lord has done.

(2) Just because something can be done badly, does not mean that we should not do it. In fact, it means that we should take that much more care to make sure we are not becoming prideful.

(3) Paul says he boasted in them:

(a) **2 Corinthians 7:4** “Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf...”

(b) Paul talks a lot of boasting in the Lord for the work that He is doing in the people. He says that all other boasting is in the flesh and James says it is arrogant (Jas. 4:16).

(c) You should not be boasting in what you have done and now see the results in the person, it is what God has done ***in the person in spite of our own failings***. We desire to see the Lord work and boast in the fact that he has done it.

(i) Boasting is like anything else, it is not the fact that it is done, it is how it is done which can make it sinful or not.

2) **For God’s Glory**

a) List to what Jesus says here in **John 15:8** “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

b) This verse is right in the middle of Jesus explaining the vine/branch relationship. This relationship is something that we need to be careful to maintain, and we do that by discipleship.

c) This is why we are discipling, *to teach people to think Biblically*. When people think biblically, they are going to act Biblically. When they act that way, then they are going to bring God glory by bearing fruit.

d) God saved us, not to keep us out of hell, but to glorify Him with our life.

e) We must train people to think as Paul did in **1 Corinthians 10:31** “Whether, then, you eat or drink ***or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.***”

i) This is not a separation of the holy and secular; we do not read that in the Bible. As a believer, our whole life is on display for others and for God.

ii) When we disciple people with the Word of God and they begin to think Biblically about their whole life, they bring glory to God in everything they do.

f) We also read in **2 Corinthians 5:14-16** “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, *so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again* on their behalf.”

i) Once again, the idea that Paul is talking about here is how we are to live our life for the glory of God. Paul knew that by training people with the Word of God they were going to be changed from the inside out and live according to the God’s standards.

3) **Because we love people**

a) Intentional and relational discipling is anything but cold and utilitarian. It is near the very essence of how God has called us to love one another within His church.

b) We read in **1 John 3:16** “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

i) We know what true love actually looks like, Christ laying down His life for us. While certainly the main reference here is to His death, it also pertains to His life.

ii) Christ gave up heaven in order to live an example for us, die and then reconcile us back to the Father. This is what we are to do for others as well.

iii) While you most likely will never have to give up your life for another believer in the sense of life and death. We are told to give up our own desires in this life for the sake of others.

(1) **Philippians 2:3-4** “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

iv) Notice what John says here, we do it for the sake of the brethren, those whom Christ has died for.

c) **John 13:35** “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

i) We show our standing before Christ by how we treat His people.

ii) This *love* is not what the world considers love. This kind of love is a love of action. It is a love that proves itself by how you treat others in the church.

iii) It is a love that is not afraid to offend or wound a brother for the sake of keeping them on the right path. **Proverbs 27:6** “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

(1) Once again, we are not worried about the results but the process with each other.

(2) We must make sure to not steamroll over people, but we must also be careful to not allow others to live in a sinful state.

d) Paul says in **Colossians 1:28-29** “We proclaim Him, *admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ*. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

i) He says quite a bit about his heart towards discipleship.

- (1) He admonishes and teaches, every man.
 - (a) Admonish is that word *νουθετέω* that we talked about last week. That means to “put in the mind” of someone.
 - (b) Teaching is simply giving people the truth. This is a fulfillment of the command given by Jesus in the Great Commission in **Matthew 28**.
 - (i) “Admonishing and teaching must be done with all wisdom. This is the larger context. As discussed in chapter 2, wisdom refers to practical discernment—understanding the biblical principles for holy conduct. The consistent pattern of Paul’s ministry was to link teaching and admonishment and bring them together in the context of the general doctrinal truths of the Word. Doctrinal teaching was invariably followed by practical admonitions. That must also be the pattern for all ministries.”¹
 - (c) Notice that he says that he does this to every man.
 - (d) Why does he do it? So that they may present every man complete in Christ. This is the goal of Paul’s ministry and should be our aim as well. We should desire to see men and women in the church come to maturity in Christ.
 - (e) We know that this will never happen this side of eternity. We are not going to be fully complete or perfect. Even Paul said in **Philippians 3:12** “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”
 - (f) We disciple people so that they will press on, they will desire to become more like Christ and one day lay hold of Christ in eternity.
- ii) Then in **verse 29** he gives us an insight into his strength.
 - (1) The two words Paul uses, labor and strive, speak of working until the point of complete exhaustion. In fact, the word for strive is where we get our English word agonize.
 - (2) No one can successfully serve the Lord without working hard. There will certainly be seasons in our life that are harder than others, but the Lord will sustain us, just as He did Paul.
 - (3) If we are willing to put our time and energy into things in this world that have no eternal rewards, we should eagerly put that much more into spiritual things.
 - (4) We all serve Christ in some capacity. We are all called to disciple, we all have the strength which Christ supplies so therefore we stand without excuse.

4) **Because we love the church**

- a) **Colossians 1:18** “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”

¹ John MacArthur, *Colossians*, Commentary on Colossians 1:28

- i) If we love Christ, we will love His people and His church. Christ is the head of the church. The church is not perfect, but we should be striving for holiness.
 - ii) If we do not see Christ as the head of the church then we will not seek to honor Him through it.
- b) What is the church?
- i) Paul says in **1 Timothy 3:15** “**but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.**”
 - (1) Paul uses imagery the church at Ephesus would have understood. As Ephesus was well known for the temple to the goddess Diana, its pillars stood out as its greatest feature. They were there to support the massive temple.
 - (2) A support of truth means that Paul is referring to the church as not only the pillar of truth but also the foundation of truth.
 - (a) This little phrase should give us an idea of how we are to not only perceive our churches but also the massive responsibility we have to be sure we are teaching the truth.
 - (b) One of the main reasons for the letter was to exhort Timothy to make sure there were not false teachers in the church or even influencing those who are in the church. Paul is emphasizing that point here by reminding Timothy what the church is all about.
 - ii) We should desire to see the church grow and this is done by evangelism and discipleship. The Lord will add people to the church, we are responsible for simply teaching the truth to them.
- c) We love the church so we want to see her pure.
- i) Paul says in **Titus 2:11-14** “**For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to *purify for Himself a people* for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**”
 - (1) It is only through discipleship that we can grow in holiness and godliness and be ready for good deeds. Jesus came into the world to gather His people, the church, and purify them.
 - (2) As the church is pure, her witness in the world becomes more and more evident. We are not to blend into the world, we are not to take on the characteristics of the world, but to be so different that we are like a city on a hill which is lit up at night time.
 - ii) Paul says some hard things in **1 Corinthians 5:11-12** “**But actually, I wrote to you *not to associate with any so-called brother* if he is an immoral (sexually) person, or covetous (greedy), or an idolater (participant in any heathen worship), or a reviler (abusive, troublemaker), or a drunkard (those**

known to be around alcohol), or a swindler (extortioner or thief)--*not even to eat with such a one.*

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?"

iii) This is not your average "church growth" model. Look at what Paul is advocating here, there should be no one in the church, who is claiming to be born again, who is immoral, covetous, an idolater, a reviler, drunkard or swindler.

iv) We are not to have any fellowship with them, not even eating with them.

(1) Why? Listen to what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."

(a) The people who are practicing such things are not going to heaven, they show themselves to be slaves of sin and Satan.

(2) How does this relate to discipleship in the church? We need to be able to judge people who are in the church and properly exhort them for the purity of the church.

(3) This means that if you see someone stuck in these sins, you exhort them as a brother. If they are obstinate and do not want to change, it is not about discipleship at that point but making sure they know they are not saved. Then **Matthew 18** and church discipline would be looked at.

(4) This is also what Paul had in mind in **Galatians 6:1** "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."

(5) We do go to them because we love them and the church. But, we ourselves must be careful because we can call into the same temptation and sin they are caught in.

5) **Because we do not have every spiritual gift**

a) We seek out people to disciple because we need others to balance our life as well.

b) **1 Corinthians 7 & 12** "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

i) Each person has gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to them. We do not individually possess them all but need to be together with one another in order to know our own weaknesses and lack.

ii) We all have blind spots in our own life that we need others to help keep in check.

iii) When we are rooted in our local church, discipling other members, we have the opportunity to not only help others grow but also ourselves.

c) As we are growing together, we are then glorifying God. You have spiritual gifts in order to edify one another. We read in **1 Corinthians 14:12** "Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel."

- i) God has uniquely placed you here in the body, as well as everyone else. He has given you gifts that others do not have and gifted others with gifts that you do not have.
- d) Paul also says in **Romans 14:19** “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”
 - i) Individualistic Christianity does not exist today, nor did it exist in Bible times. Believers do not grow in isolation, because they were not meant to.
 - ii) We live in the context of a community where each of us is expected to do the work that the Lord has not only saved us and gifted us for, but what He expects us to do as well.
- 6) **Because we want to pay it forward**
 - a) **2 Timothy 1:5** “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”
 - i) Timothy was given the gospel which made its way from his grandmother to his mother and then to him. Someone disciplined him and he is doing the same to others.
 - b) Think of the 12 apostles which were with Christ for some 3 years. They were disciplined by Him and then willingly went out to share with others, even though it cost them their life.
 - c) **Acts 19:9-10** “But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”
 - i) Paul took two years and was just discipling those in Ephesus and the surrounding areas. He had benefited from the teachings of Jesus as well. **Galatians 1:11-12** “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”
 - ii) Paul knew the grace that was shown to him and wanted to show it others.

Conclusion

Last week we saw what Biblical, proactive discipleship looks like. This week we read about different motivations for discipleship in the local church. Next week we are going to look at some of the common excuses and barriers to proactive discipleship in the church. We will be looking at this from the vantage point of both the one doing the discipling and those being disciplined.