

Maranatha Bible Church 2020

Equipping Hour: Proactive Discipleship

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

Schedule of Classes:

Theological:

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

In this time together, we are going to look at some of the common barriers or excuses for not discipling or not being a disciple. We will look at an objection and then respond with some helpful ways to overcome. My assumption is that all us in this church have barriers and excuses that may keep us from a discipling relationship with someone. We may be able to *intellectually* ascent to the importance and need of discipleship, but we still carry with us many objections which make it difficult to put into practice.

Barriers or Excuses:

We are going to break these down under three headings: problems with Theology, problems with complacency and problems with inadequacy.

1) Problems with Theology:

a) Self-Protection:

i) They don't engage others so that won't have to be vulnerable themselves.

(1) If we are honest, nobody likes to be vulnerable with people they do not really know. When the discipleship relationship starts, matters of the heart are going to come to the surface.

(2) Perhaps there are dark secrets in your heart that you hope nobody finds out about.

(a) These are things that may be prohibiting you from growth in the Lord.

ii) If they keep their relationships with others at the surface level, they won't be asked questions that could expose them.

iii) This could be a case of un-mortified fear of man:

(1) **Proverbs 29:25** "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted."

iv) It also could be a selfish desire that they don't want to give up:

(1) **Proverbs 18:1** "He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom."

v) Selfish people are not good question askers.

b) Self-absorbed:

i) They think so much about themselves that they don't care to learn about others.

ii) People whose minds are occupied with themselves all the time are not going to have room left in their thoughts for the needs of others.

(1) **Romans 12:3a** "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think..."

(2) If we are the most important person in our world, that is going to come out in how we desire to interact with others around us.

iii) Life is about them. They happily enjoy when others engage them, but they can't muster up enough humility to proactively pursue someone else.

iv) Nor do they ask questions they don't care about—namely, other people's needs.

(1) **Romans 12:16** "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation."

(2) We should never think that we have arrived or that we know all that we can know.

c) Self-pity:

i) This person is self-wallowing, and because they are too busy feeling sorry for themselves and their weaknesses, they never increase in faith to learn how they can overcome their sins and help others overcome the same besetting sins.

(1) **Psalm 51:12-13** "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You."

(a) If we find ourselves in a place of self-wallowing, we can cry out to the Lord to restore our joy because of His great salvation. It starts with taking our eyes off of ourselves and putting them rightly on the Lord.

(b) Then, as the psalmist says, you are able to help others overcome their sins.

(2) **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of

fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...

(a) We must understand that our enemy is going to always attempt keep us from growth in the Lord, and it starts in the mind. We need to be intentional in our warfare and not allowing our thoughts to be taken over with evil.

ii) This person lives in a state of shallow repentance and does not look to Jesus with eyes of faith in order to help others.

(1) Hebrews 12:1-3 “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

(a) If our eyes are anywhere other than Christ, we are going to lose heart. The battle is long and weariness is going to set in; we must continue to fight the good fight.

(b) Do not look forward to peace on earth but to knowing that one day you will be with Christ.

d) *These three types of people all have one thing in common, a Theological problem.*

i) They are only thinking of themselves; not others and not God. As believers, we are called have the mind of Christ and to look out for other believers.

ii) As Paul says in **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.*”

iii) I want to point out what this does and does not mean. This does not mean that we let ourselves go and never do anything that is beneficial for ourselves.

iv) Notice what Paul says, *do not merely (only) look out for your own personal interests*. You are more than welcome to have your own personal interests, but if you put those over and above others, then you are being selfish.

v) What this does mean is that the church should be taking care of each other. If we have someone in need and you can help them in that need, put your own interests aside and help them out.

How can we practically make sure that we do not fall into these ways of thinking?

2) Problems with complacency:

- a) There are two very common objections to proactive discipleship...*I just do not feel like it* or *I simply do not have enough time*. These are the top two excuses or barriers that I hear regarding discipleship.
- b) It is no secret that we live in a busy time. Our schedules are packed with activities from work, kids, school, church, etc. Let alone people desiring to have “me-time.”¹
- c) It is not to say that the things we have filled our lives with are not *good things*, but the question that we need to ask ourselves is *are these the best things?*
- d) We must orient ourselves to what the Bible says are important in life, not just what we think or what our culture tells us is important.
- e) Our life is only full when we are living for the glory of Christ. When we, or our friends, are not living to full glory of Christ, something is missing.
 - i) If we choose not to take time and encourage our brothers and sisters in the Lord, is that loving? Is that really living for the Kingdom?
- f) I want to take apart the aforementioned Hebrews verses regarding sinful things and “things” in our life.
 - i) **Hebrews 12:1-3** “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, ***let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us***, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ***For consider Him*** who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
 - (1) In this great section of Hebrews we are told to *lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us*.
 - (2) I think we all understand that sin which so easily entangles us. These are the things that we know may cause us to sin, but perhaps they are comfortable to us.
 - (a) We will discuss in a minute what battling this sin looks like.
 - (3) What I want to briefly talk about is the *encumbrance* which the author talks about. This is the only time in the NT this word is used.
 - (a) It is defined, not as sin but as a bulk, a mass, a burden or a weight.
 - (b) This would be something in our life that is not sinful, but hindering us from really growing in grace and knowledge. Not something that is hindering our salvation, but something that really keeps us from having a close relationship with the church and with Christ.
 - (4) This would be something that may not be a bad thing, but it is not the best thing.

¹ Whatever that means...

(a) For example, you have a lot of debt so you work more to pay it off. That is not a bad thing, but you miss out on Bible studies, time with family, etc. It may be that you would have to sit down and reconsider some choices to make the Lord more of a priority.

(b) The people that you choose to spend your time with, they may be other believers, but are they helping you grow more in Christ.

(5) As the author says, we are to run the race with endurance. It is not a sprint, but a long marathon. We get the power for the race from Christ, but if we do not have time for Him we are going to be running in our own strength.

g) **Battling the sin that so easily entangles us.**²

h) Because these two excuses *I just do not feel like it* or *I simply do not have enough time* are so common (and perhaps familiar in our own hearts) I want to take a minute and see how we can battle this.

i) We need to know how to battle the sin of complacency or apathy in ourselves and be able to lead others into battling their own sin. This is key in discipleship, growing in grace in the midst of a sinful world.

ii) Start with some key questions in general when looking at your own heart:

(1) What besetting sin are you looking to find power over?

(a) Look beyond the complacency or apathy to your heart to find out *why* you are complacent.

(2) What area do you want to become more like Christ?

(a) This is an area that you look at and see that you fall short. While it is true that we all fall short in every area as sinners, that is not an excuse to stop striving in certain areas.

iii) How to discover what sinful cravings you have or what areas that are entangling you:

(1) What lies do the Scriptures expose that I believe in the moments I practice this sinful habit? Eph. 4:22, Jas. 4:1–3

(2) What are ways I practically rationalize to justify this sinful pattern? Eph. 4:22; Jas. 1:14

(3) What wrong thinking have I developed from my past that contributes to my struggle today? Phil. 3:7–16

(4) How long have I practiced this sin and to what have I done to feed it? 1 Cor. 10; Phil. 3:7–16

(5) What experiences from my past contribute to my present struggle? Pss. 73; 78; 90

iv) Why am I so prone to worship this idol? Ezek. 14:3 (An idol is anything your heart craves more than God Himself.)

(1) What does that teach me about myself, and, where and why I am vulnerable? Heb. 12:1–2

(2) How does this sin demonstrate the ways I think incorrectly about my God? 2 Cor. 10:3–5

(3) How does this sin show where I think incorrectly about myself? Prov. 3:7; Rom. 12:3

² Darren Roberts, *Proactive Discipleship*, pp. 15-16

- (4) Why do I struggle so much to give up these idols? Ps. 32; 51
- (5) What do these idols demonstrate about the condition of my heart? Heb. 4:2; 1 John 5:4
- (6) What is misguided in my motives when I sin in this way? Jas. 4:1–3
- (7) What would need to be present, or absent, for me to not struggle anymore in this area? (The answer will give you insight into your idol.)

- (a) Examine portals that feed these evil cravings and actions.

v) When do these sins, evil cravings, and idols show up in my life? Ezek. 14:3; Rom 13:14

- (1) In what relationships? Why does it happen with these specific people?
- (2) At what places? Why there?
- (3) In what scenarios? Why this scenario instead of other scenarios?
- (4) At what times? Why these particular times?
- (5) How often?

vi) Where are the most notable areas that sin needs to put off and portals need to be closed? Rom. 13:14

- (1) When—and with whom—am I most tempted to soften this sin and lie (put on a mask) so I won't have to face it? Why them? Ps. 32:3–4

vii) **In summary:**

- (1) Make a list of the specific fleshly fruits/deeds coming from these rotten roots! Matt. 7:15–23; 12:34–35; Gal. 5:19–23; Eph. 4:31–32; Jas. 3:13–4:3; 1 Pet. 2:1–3
- (2) Engage in confessing specific sins and bearing fruit in keeping with true repentance.
- (3) What would the most specific and self-indicting language be that I need to use to agree with God's perspective in this area? Pss. 32; 51; 73; 78; 90; Dan. 9:1–20
- (4) What evil motivations, lies, and idols have I discovered in this process that I need to specifically confess and forsake in true repentance? Pss. 73; 78; Prov. 28:13; 2 Cor. 7:9–11; 1 John 1:9
- (5) What would the specific fruit of repentance look like in this area? Said another way: What actions need to be taken to painfully starve these sinful cravings in the moment(s) of temptation? Matt. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:9–11; Rom. 8:13. Get specific and practical as you consider Jesus' words (Matt 5:29–30).
- (6) What relationships have been affected by my sin that I need to restore? Matt. 5:23–24, 2 Cor. 7:9–11; Eph. 4:32

viii) Engage in renewing your mind in the moment and cultivating a greater fear of God.

- (1) What specific truths from the Word will crush the specific lies I believe, in order for my mind to be renewed and for me to walk in a more reverent fear of God? Prov. 1:7; 15:3, Isa. 66:2; Jer. 17:9–10; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Jas. 1:14; 4:1–4
- (2) More specifically regarding mind renewal and cultivating a fear and trembling before God:

- (3) What warnings do the Scriptures bring to this area? Heb. 3:12; 5:11–14
- (4) What hope-giving promises do I need to believe in the moment of temptation? Heb. 11:6
- (5) What commands directly confront my actions and motivations? Ps. 19:7–9; 2 Tim. 3:16–17
- (6) What passages most directly implicate my heart in this area? Prov. 4:23
- (7) What Bible stories illustrate this area? 1 Cor. 10:11
- (8) What did Jesus do in similar moments? Matt. 4:1–11; 1 Cor. 11:1; Col. 1:28–29

ix) Further put on righteous choices and holy conduct.

- (1) What actions will be needed to be put on by faith to mortify this sin in the moment? Rom. 8:13–14; 13:14; Eph. 2:10; 4:24–32; 1 Pet. 1:15–2:3
- (2) What temptations do I need to be most ready to flee from? Gen 39; Ps. 78:8; 2 Tim. 2:22

3) Problems with inadequacy:

- a) There are some that simply think they have nothing to share or teach someone else. Others think that they do not know enough or are not in a mature place to be able to share with someone.
- b) We know that, firstly, every Christian has been blessed with the ability to *at least* share the gospel with someone else.
 - i) At a bare minimum, you can seek out someone which whom you are able to share the gospel with.
 - ii) The same gospel which brought you to salvation in Christ is the same gospel that brings other to salvation as well.
 - iii) We never stray far from the gospel in our discipling of one another.
- c) Titus 2:1-8 “But as for **you**, speak (imperative) the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. **Older men** are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. **Older women** likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the **young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Likewise urge (imperative) the **young men** to be sensible; in all things **show yourself** to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”
 - i) Lets take this apart to see what Paul has in mind with regard to *inadequacy*:
 - (1) You = Titus
 - (a) As the pastor of the church, he was to *speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine*. His responsibility was to the whole church, generally speaking.
 - (2) Older Men

- (a) No required education here, but to have a character about them. They are to be mature in their reputation and faith. Seasoned with what life they have lived through.
- (3) Older Women
- (a) The same as older men, to have a known and stable character about them.
- (4) Young Women
- (a) They are to look up to the older women, to learn from them how to be a woman of God.
- (5) Young Men
- (a) They are exhorted to be of a sound mind or to be able to exercise self-control.
- (6) Show Yourself = Titus
- (a) He was to be an example to the whole flock, not just in doctrine (as was previously stated) but also in his works and speech.
- (7) "...for Titus and all the groups he admonishes, their tasks consist *not in acquisition of some special knowledge, not in arriving at peculiar experiences of the divine grace, but in transformation of the daily affairs that fill up everyday living.*"³
- (8) At a bare minimum, everyone in the church has a responsibility to live a life which they are then able to show others how to live as well.
- (9) The bulk of one's normal discipleship in the church is simply showing and teaching by experience using the Bible as the lens by which we view life.
- d) To further illustrate this point, **Titus 3:1** starts with "**Remind them...**" As Paul is certainly addressing Titus here, commanding him to remind the church, what is overtly implied is that the church once were taught and knew these things.
- i) This is also much of discipleship in the church, *simply reminding people of what they already know*. As the Word is taught from the pulpit, people need help/encouragement/reminding of how they are to apply this to their own life.
- ii) The idea of *reminding* is quite common in the NT letters.
- (1) **Romans 15:15** "**But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God...**"
- (2) **1 Corinthians 4:17** "**For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.**"
- (3) **2 Timothy 2:14** "**Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.**"

³ Robert Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus (PNTC)*, notes on Titus 2:7

- (4) 2 Peter 1:12 “Therefore, *I will always be ready to remind you of these things*, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.”
- (5) Jude 1:5 “Now *I desire to remind you*, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.”

4) When we really boil down the Christian life, it is about living sacrificially, being sanctified and doing all things to the glory of God. Never be afraid to remind someone of this.

Next week we start the practical part of the class. We will start by looking at Discipling the hurting.