

Maranatha Bible Church 2020
Equipping Hour: Proactive Discipleship
Week 4: Discipling the Hurting

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

We are now moving into the practical section of proactive discipleship. We have defined what proactive discipleship is, looked at examples in the Scriptures, talked about our motivations for doing it and last week, we discussed some of the common excuses and barriers which keep people from discipleship.

Now its time to put some thought into how we are going to practice real discipleship. One of the most common topics which will certainly come up to either begin a discipleship relationship or during discipleship is hardship. Even during times of great discouragement or hurt, we need to be able to disciple the heart. This is true for families, when husbands, wives or kids face hurt. Friends and co-workers may need to have you come alongside them and disciple them through something. While this may be a specific topic, it is important that the goal/focus is still to shepherd the individual so that they will view their situation through a Biblical lens.

Before we dive into discipling those who are hurting, I want to take some time and start by looking at some general ways to disciple one another and then discuss specifically what discipling the hurting looks like. I hope this will give you some ideas for resources that you are able to use and also how to possibly structure your time together. Also, we will discuss the effort that should be put into a proper discipling relationship.

General Resources for Discipleship:

- The Word of God should be central to any discipleship relationship. It is not necessary to *only* use the Bible as the book you go through, but any material you choose to use must have Scripture as its central focus. Our desire is to raise people up to think Biblically.
- **A good study Bible:**
 - Never underestimate the value of simply reading through a section of Scripture with someone and meeting up to simply discuss it.
 - By using a good study Bible, it will help iron out the more difficult passages and help to keep each of you on track.
 - MacArthur Study Bible (NASB, NKJV, ESV)
 - ESV Study Bible
 - Reformation Study Bible (ESV)
 - Chronological Study Bible (NKJV)
 - Systematic Theology Study Bible (ESV)
 - I would personally recommend NASB, ESV or NKJV for personal study¹.
- **Systematic Theology:**²
 - Wayne Grudem's *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, is an excellent primer for systematic theology. It is a condensed version of his systematic theology book.
 - R.C. Sproul's *Everyone's a Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*
 - J.I. Packer's *Concise Theology*
 - Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*, (Third Edition)
 - John MacArthur's *Biblical Doctrine*
 - James Montgomery Boice's *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology, Revised & Expanded*
- **Specific Counseling / Discipleship Issues:**
 - *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges (has a study guide)
 - *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney
 - *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by R. Kent Hughes (has study guide)
 - *The Excellent Wife* by Martha Peace (has study guide)
 - *The Exemplary Husband* by Stuart Scott (has study guide)
 - *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul (has study guide)

¹ While the NIV is a good translation, it can tend to be more thought for thought versus word for word.

² All systematic theology books should be read with caution in the mind and a Bible in the hand.

- **Christian Biographies³:**

- *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes* by Ian H. Murray
- Bruce Olson *Bruchko*
- Don Richardson *Peace Child*
- *50 People Every Christian Should Know: Learning from Spiritual Giants of the Faith*, by Warren Wiersbe
- *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe

1) **What should a time of discipleship / fellowship consist of when you are together?**

- a) Always have a clear aim of where you desire the overall process to go and where you desire each time you get together to go.
- b) Set a time and place to meet up, do your home work and make sure you know how long you are planning on meeting with one another. Block that time out in your schedule, turn off your cell phone and do not respond to emails, make this time a priority.
- c) Prayer with one another and/or for one another⁴.
- d) Build a friendship/relationship with one another. It is not a “business” meeting, but Christian fellowship.
- e) While it is important to discuss what you read/studied over the previous week, it is not the ultimate goal. If there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed, do not be afraid to “skip” the assignments in favor of speaking about other things.
- f) “Really, the ‘how’ of discipling is not that complicated. It’s about doing life together with other people as you all journey toward Christ. We make friends and then walk them in a Christward (sic) direction. We want to understand God and his ways and live as the Bible calls us to. We want to be accurate in our understanding and holy in our living. We want to know the truth and to live well. All to the glory of the God in whose image we’re made!”⁵

2) **Be ready to pay the cost.⁶**

- a) The cost is fourfold: time...study...prayer...love
- b) **Time**...every discipling relationship looks different with regards to time.
 - i) Most of the time, what started in one way is not going to remain the same over time.
 - ii) We must be deliberate with our use of time so that we can see people growing in godliness.
 - iii) There are going to be times that you or the other person is going to have to sacrifice something in order to maintain consistent discipleship.

³ These are not to be read for Theology or even normal practice (like a single women in the mission field) but to get a sense of what people did before us in the service of Christ.

⁴ It may be difficult to pray with one another at the time of meeting, if you are meeting in a non-private place. Be sure to be in prayer for one another throughout the week even if you do not pray with one another when you do meet.

⁵ Mark Dever *Discipling: How to help others follow Jesus* p. 86

⁶ Taken from chapter 9 of Mark Dever’s book *Discipling: How to help others follow Jesus*.

- iv) With time comes hardship...hardships are key moments in discipling relationships.⁷
 - v) Nobody grows overnight and most people need to grow in the same way multiple times. Therefore, you may be reminding someone multiple times of the same thing. Be ready for the long haul.
 - c) **Study**...you not only need to be able to feed yourself the Word, but you have to be able to feed others.
 - i) We should desire to get to a place where we are not simply giving good advice, but pointing people to where they can go in the Bible.
 - ii) For sure, you and I are never going to know everything in the Bible. That is not the point. The point is that you and I are able to look things up and have the confidence in the Scriptures to rely on them.
 - iii) Your desire should be to set aside daily time where you are able to read Scriptures.
 - d) **Prayer**...you are not alone in the work (**1 Cor. 3:9**), you desire spiritual change (**Rom. 12:1-2**).
 - i) Make sure you are not only relying on the power and work of the Holy Spirit, but they are too.
 - ii) We should never move ahead with a task for the Lord without first going to Him in prayer.
 - iii) Prayer shows our humility and reliance on the Lord and puts our focus where it needs to be.
 - e) **Love**...we are commanded to love the Lord and love others; it underpins everything we do.
 - i) Love initiates a discipling relationship
 - (1) It is love that restricts us to deny ourselves and look out for others.
 - ii) Love perseveres in a discipling relationship
 - (1) When you think others are taking advantage of you or simply not putting in the effort
 - iii) Love humbly receives the criticism that often comes in a discipling relationship
 - (1) Our concern should not be what others think of us but their right relationship with the Lord
- 3) **How do you know that you are ready to pursue someone for discipleship?**⁸
- a) This is a great question. We should desire to be able to lead others in Christ, but all the while knowing that we too need to be led in Christ.
 - b) It should start with two key questions:
 - i) What type of disciple have I been toward Christ from His Word, and others who have been conduits of that truth in discipling me?
 - (1) In other words, *have you been a fruitful disciple yourself?*
 - ii) How is my *one another* ministry at home and at church?
 - (1) Are you simply serving your family and the church, fulfilling the basic calling of believers?
 - c) The reasoning behind these simple questions is if you have not been faithful in receiving discipleship, you will not be able to train others to do so. Furthermore, if you are not already looking out for the body of Christ in the simplest ways, discipleship may be too much at this time.

⁷ This will be our focus in the next section.

⁸ Taken from Darren Roberts *Proactive Discipleship*, Appendix 3

- d) How can you evaluate if you have been a faithful disciple?
 - i) You have pursued it.
 - ii) You ask questions and invite instruction and criticism.
 - iii) You know and are honest about your weaknesses.
 - iv) You are teachable and put into practice instruction.
 - v) You value the time of those who are discipling you.
 - vi) You do not seek out “easy” instructions that appeal to the flesh.
 - vii) You have a plan on how to battle sin in your life.

Discipling the Hurting

- 1) Without a doubt, the most common type of discipleship I have encountered is hurt people. This hurt can either be the cause of someone looking for discipleship, the cause of me seeking them out or something that happened to them as we were actively discipling.
 - a) We live in a very hostile world that is filled with sin, if you spend any amount of time around other people you are going to encounter hurt ones.
- 2) There are many situations which may come upon you when discipling:
 - a) Someone you have been discipling suddenly loses their mother.
 - b) A person in your small group has their roommate murdered.
 - c) A young wife wakes up one morning to find her husband captivated with pornography.
 - d) A young man calls you in the middle of the night and is ready to take his own life.
 - e) A newly married couple reaches out because of the husbands desire for his former girlfriends.
- 3) These are all real situations which have happened to me, as both someone in the church body before becoming a pastor and since becoming a pastor.
- 4) As I have said before, discipling and counseling are fairly synonymous in the Bible. These five scenarios may seem like situations that a counselor would handle, but they all need to be disciplined.
- 5) How can we respond to these situations? What can we say/do for them? What can you pray? What can you give them from the Word of God to bring comfort to their souls?

Whether you go to these people or they come to you, you should be ready to disciple them.

- In preparation for situations like this, you should have a good theology of suffering⁹.
- 1) Whether you are proactive in going or passive in that they come to you, ***make sure you put yourself firstly in their pain and sorrow.***
 - a) **Romans 12:15 “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”**

⁹ This is not the purpose of this class, but if this is something you need to refine, there are resources available.

2) ***Do not try and offer an answer right away.***

- a) James 1:19 “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger...”
- b) Proverbs 18:17 “The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.”
- c) Proverbs 18:13 “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”
 - i) This will, by far, be the hardest to do when you are put in many situations. We must not respond when we only know part of the story.

3) ***Know that you are there as an ambassador of comfort from the Lord.***

- a) 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”
 - i) Remember that God has comforted you for a purpose. It was not just so you would feel better but it was for you to be able to comfort others.
 - ii) Think of how you have been comforted, by the Word, by the Gospel, by others simply being there.
- b) I once was with a man when his mother died in the hospital. It was sudden and unexpected, but there he and I sat next to her. I did not say anything at that time except *I'm here for you and God is good.*
- c) It is not about having the right thing to say, it is about showing genuine love for the person, just as Christ has shown for you.

4) ***Be able to instruct the person in the midst of their crisis.***

- a) There are many Psalms which we can use, lets look at 62:8 “Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.”
 - i) Regardless of the event, we as believers are instructed to trust in God all the time. We may not know all the circumstances and/or outcomes, but we are certain that we can trust in Him.
 - ii) It is not only okay, but it is commanded to have an unguarded time of communion with the Lord.
 - (1) Tell the person to simply pour out their heart before Him. Pray His Word back to Him.
 - (a) As you do this, make sure that you are also showing respect to God. It is okay to be confused and have doubt, but not to accuse God of doing evil.
 - iii) Lastly, let them know they can take refuge (shelter, safe place from danger) in God.
 - (1) That is done by reading His Word, knowing His promises and trusting in them. This is not an emotional response but the making up of your mind to trust God *even when it does not feel right.*

5) ***Focus on the character of God.***

- a) What are some ways we can encourage someone, using Scripture, with regards to God's character?

6) ***Do not try and explain something that you do not know.***

- a) Do not make promises or try and put the pieces together for someone in an attempt to comfort them.
- b) Answer questions that you do know, and simply say you do not know when you do not.
- c) Even if you cannot answer their questions, you know that God is good and He loves His children.

Remind them of these truths.

7) ***Look for ways to practically serve them.***

- a) Galatians 6:9-10 "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
- b) When our brothers and sisters in the church are hurting, do not wait for them to tell you it is okay to serve them. Just do something.
- c) If you know they need a meal, just show up with one. If you know they need help with kids, assume that you are going to do it. If you see an opportunity, take it.

8) ***Pray for them***

- a) When you are with them or apart, pray for them.
- The overall goal is not to take away the pain and hurt, but to make sure they reorient themselves to have the proper view of God. We may never know *why* someone is going through something, but we need to make sure we have the proper perspective as they go through it.
 - Suffering and hardships are not meaningless to the believer. We do not have senseless tragedies, this is because we know that God is using it all for His glory and our good.