

Introduction to Discipleship – Day 1

Matthew 4:18-20

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

While I was growing up I spent quite a bit of time fishing with my dad. We didn't talk much while fishing; didn't want to scare the fish. We didn't share deep thoughts on philosophy, religion or politics. Truth be told, most of the time we didn't do much catching while we were fishing. But the funny thing is, each time after I finished the non-talking fishing time with my dad, not catching fish, I felt closer to him.

I wonder if Jesus' followers ever had that same experience; spending time with Him, not fully understanding what He was saying or doing, but at the end of the day they felt closer to Him.

Sometimes, even if the fish aren't biting you still have to fish. Sometimes, even when you're not sure where Jesus is leading, in obedience you still need to follow.

Introduction to Discipleship – Day 2

John 6:66-69

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Once, as a child, I was punished for something, I don't remember what, but as a result of what I deemed an unfair punishment I decided I would run away from home. Far away from my unjust parents who disciplined me, and boy would they be sorry. But while planning my departure I ran into a problem, I didn't know where I would go.

All my friends were my same age and couldn't accept runaways in their homes. My grandparents lived too far away to walk, and I wasn't allowed to ride my bike after dark. I realized the best place for me was home.

Just as the mini-version of me came to realize about my home and my family, Jesus' twelve closest followers knew that staying with Jesus was the best place to be. Even today, two thousand years after His life here on earth, staying with Jesus is the best place to be.

Introduction to Discipleship – Day 3

John 14:5-6

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

With navigation systems in most cars and in every cell phone these days, it's hard to imagine how anyone could ever get lost, but sometimes I still do.

Sometimes I think I know the way and don't even look at my phone's GPS system. Other times I decide I know a better way to go than what the navigational app tells me to go. It doesn't make sense that with all of this technology at my disposal that I would ever go the wrong way, but sometimes I still do.

I feel like Jesus was telling His disciples that all they had to do was to follow the ultimate navigational system. All they had to do was to utilize the resource they had at their disposal. All they had to do was to look to Him, the Way, and they would never be lost again. And so it still goes... you want to know the right way to go? Follow Jesus.

New Identity – Day 1

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

It's kind of scary to be new. The new kid in town, new kid on the block, going to a new school or a new job. There's comfort in the old, even if the new is better, we know how to do the old. New requires change.

I am so thankful that when I came to Christ, God took away the old and replaced it with new. God did all the hard work, He sent His Son as the reconciling sacrifice for all of the things I have done wrong, such that, all that old stuff was washed away a new creation replaced it.

All I had to do in this amazing transformation was to receive His message and believe it.

New Identity – Day 2

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

I've spent a lot of time wondering what God looks like. Sometimes I think He's kind of like Santa Claus with the white beard and roly polly belly. Other times I think of a more wizardly look like Gandalf from Lord of the Rings. With this image He's not nearly as jovial as the Santa God, this God is much more equipped for battle and He can get pretty angry.

I wonder, though, if God isn't more like a father whose heart aches for His children. A father who gave all he had in order to save a bunch of unruly kids. A father who loves so much that he wouldn't withhold anything from them, even his only son. This God, this Father, cherishes His misbehaving children. He seeks them, calls them to Him, and brings them home to Him.

Safe.

New Identity – Day 3

Ephesians 2:4-10

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

One of my all time favorite birthday gifts I received was a bike when I was eleven years old. I'd had bikes before but they were always hand-me-downs from my older brothers; this was my first new bike just for me.

I think God's grace is the same way. While He's shared it with millions of other people before, the grace He gives to you is especially for you, just your size, brand new, ready to be opened.

Holy Spirit – Day 1

John 14:16-19

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

As a father my children have taught me that they ask dad for certain things and they ask mom for others. They ask mom for insights on life and dating and the more intellectual things. They ask dad for money, help with the car, and help in killing bugs.

Jesus asked His Father for some help for us when He knew that He would be leaving this world. He asked, and we received the Spirit of truth to live with us and to guide us in all that we do. What a gift we have received that we have the very Spirit of God with us each step of our day, and since we have this gift, let's make sure to use it.

Holy Spirit – Day 2

Acts 1:7-8

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The more I learn about God the more I realize I don't understand. His immenseness, His incredible love, His amazing grace; all of these things and more I capture a piece of with my own limited understanding, but I just know I haven't fully grasped it yet.

So, even though there are things we don't know about God, things we don't understand, we can tell others about Him. We can be witnesses to other people as to the things He has done in our lives. These are the stories of our own lives; unique, undeniable, and perfectly our own. And if you feel a little uneasy about the idea of sharing your faith with other people, don't worry. He will provide the power you need through the Holy Spirit to be in the places you need to be and to say the words you need to say.

Holy Spirit – Day 3

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Fruit trees are great to have in your back yard. Fruit trees are great to have in your back yard if you really love the fruit they produce.

When I was a kid we had a peach tree in our back yard and at the beginning of the season it was great. We had peaches! We had peach slices, peach pie, peaches on cereal and on ice cream - we had peaches until we were sick of peaches!

But the fruit of the Spirit, the outpouring of God's indwelling, are things we can never get tired of. They are gifts that never get old, never wear out, never need batteries and they are fruit that is meant to be shared with others.

Your Story – Day 1

John 3:27-30

To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”

What do you say to someone about what you believe? Do you go all theological and speak Greek and Hebrew, explaining your experience with God as a professor from a lectern? Sometimes it’s hard to know what to say, and what not to say.

I think we learn something valuable in these verses reading John’s testimony of Christ. John first started by saying who he is not. I can gain a lot of common ground with people by first saying that I’m not perfect, I’m not all that, I’m not a finished product. But I am forgiven.

Don’t worry about making your testimony perfect, just think about making it real.

Your Story – Day 2

Acts 22:6-8

“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.” ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.

Paul’s testimony is so cool. I’m so jealous every time I read it.

Can you imagine telling people that you met Jesus through a shot of light from heaven and a voice rumbling from the sky? So cool.

My testimony seems lame compared to Paul’s, and compared to a lot of other people’s who were saved from really terribly hard life circumstances. But here’s the thing about my testimony, it’s mine. It’s nobody else’s. So if God created this life I’ve lived to get to this point, He must have had a reason, or a person in mind, for me to share it with.

Your Story – Day 3

John 4:39-42

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

What I love about this story is how the condition of the woman changed by her getting to know Jesus.

In the verses that proceed these, she’s at the well drawing water during the hottest part of the day, the time of day when no “good” people would draw water. She was an outcast because of her life situation, the choices she made, and the way other people looked at her.

But now, after she told her fellow townspeople about Jesus, she was accepted by them. Her words about Jesus changed other people’s lives for eternity, and I bet they never looked at her in the same way again.

God's Story – Day 1

Genesis 1:27, 2:1-3

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The Creation Story; in six days God created the heavens and the earth, fish, birds, animals of the land and the sea, wild creatures and the more friendly type. On the sixth day God created us, people. Male and female He created us.

With all the trouble we've caused Him ever since sometimes I wonder why He did it. Wouldn't it have been a lot easier just to stop at oxen? We the people can be a real pain sometimes. Here's what I think. I think He made us because He wanted something really special, relationships not based on conditions or performance, but based on love; unconditional love. Relationships that can carry us through storms and pain and hurt and all of the things life can bring. I think He made us because He wanted a way to show His incredible love and in some small ways, for us to show that love to other people.

So this very beginning of God's story starts with creation, and it was very good.

God's Story – Day 2

Romans 5:6-8

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Sometimes at Costco they'll have some of their vendors showing off their product. Mixers, knives, massage chairs, I have seen some interesting demonstrations at Costco, but I admit, they've never had enough impact on me to actually buy any of the products demonstrated.

God's story includes the greatest demonstration of love ever shown; Christ dying for us. He took the guilt and shame of all of our sins and bled them out, there on the cross for all to see. Even more incredible, He took this eternal burden upon Himself and provided us grace knowing we didn't deserve it, knowing we could never earn it. Think about this sometime, heck, think about this all of the time - Christ died for YOU!

God's Story – Day 3

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

In this world of seemingly constant mourning, crying and pain, we can sometimes lose sight of the eternity we have before us.

God's story concludes forevermore with Him living with us. He as our neighbor and friend, wiping away once and for all the tears we've shed for the loss and the pain we've experienced. Think of this, our Lord and Savior, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Creator of all things, gently wiping our damp cheeks to remove the tears we'll never shed again.

It's with this knowledge that God's story concludes but never ends.

Prayer – Day 1

Hebrews 6:19-20

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

In college we had to do a lot of group projects. I suppose it was a good thing - learning to work with others, etc. But there always seemed to be that one person who didn't do their part, they slowed everyone else down and inhibited progress - they were anchors to the team. But anchors aren't always bad things, they can serve a purpose. They keep us from drifting off to places we shouldn't go.

The writer of Hebrews paints a great word picture of what prayer does, it anchors our soul, firm and secure. This relationship gained through prayer, through communication with God is made possible by Jesus removing the curtain from the Most Holy Place (Matthew 27:51). With this torn curtain, we have access to God in such a personal way, we get to talk directly to Him.

Thank God for this anchor for your soul, thank Him personally, today, in prayer.

Prayer – Day 2

Luke 5:15-16

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

It seems like so many people today want to be famous, well known; influencers. With that attention can come unwanted pressure and scrutiny, and then the fame isn't so great.

At the height of His ministry Jesus was certainly drawing crowds. People who needed to hear His words, feel His love, receive His healing would follow Him throughout the country side. Over and over in Scripture we see that the way He dealt with all of this attention, all of this neediness, was to pray. He would go off by Himself to spend time with His Father in heaven. We need to learn from His example as we face our own pressures and pain and problems in our lives, let's go to God the anchor for our soul.

Prayer – Day 3

Matthew 6:9-13

“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Sometimes I have so much to say that I can't say anything. The words get all piled up and stuck inside, so instead of saying something, I say nothing. There can be so many things we want to express to God it can be difficult to let the words out, to organize our thoughts, to align our heads with our hearts.

Jesus gave us this prayer to help clear out the things that can clog up our communication with God. If you ever has so much to say that you can't say anything to Him, pray these words with an open heart and feel the comfort they bring.

Bible – Day 1

Luke 4:3-4

The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

I have to admit that when I read these verses the smell of fresh baked bread fills my mind and I start to get a little hungry.

That, of course, is probably not what we should take away from this exchange of temptation, Jesus, and the devil. The key is that Jesus, after 40 days of fasting, who had to be hungry, fought His temptation with His knowledge of scripture. If Jesus, the Son of God, relied upon scripture as a defense against temptation, we probably should too.

What’s your plan to hear from God today? What method will you use to prepare yourself for your battle against temptation?

Bible – Day 2

John 1:1-3, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Words create worlds.

The world God created was established by His spoken word. He said, “let there be light,” and there was light. Nothing else needed to happen, no plans had to be approved, no drawings completed, God just said it and it happened. Our words can also create worlds for other people. Kind, gentle words of peace create peaceful worlds. Harsh, angry words create anxiety filled worlds.

As you hear from God, use His word to shape your world and the worlds of those around you.

Bible – Day 3

2 Timothy 3:6-9

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

Unfortunately, a lot of the things I “know” come from TV and movies. I grew up watching a lot of both of these forms of entertainment and I can quote more lines from “Tommy Boy” than lines of the Star Spangled Banner. These are not facts I’m proud of but they are true none the less.

Real knowledge, though, comes from truth, and truth comes from God. The best way you can gain truth and knowledge is by hearing God’s word, digging into the Bible, learning from the only true source of truth.

Obedience – Day 1

James 1:22-25

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

I don't know about you, but for me there are typically two reactions when I see myself in the mirror. The first one is, oh... that's what I look like today. The second one is to try and fix some things - comb the hair, wash the face, try and remove anything that needs to be removed.

I think when we walk away from reading Gods word and feel like we need to work on something that's probably a good thing. There are things in each of our lives that we need to remember to try and fix. These verses from James encourage us to know the word of God and to do the word of God. Its when we do both listen and obey, that our lives move forward in the best possible ways.

Obedience – Day 2

John 14:12-15

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. If you love me, keep my commands.”

Jesus was talking to His disciples during the Last Supper and encouraged them with the thought that belief in Him leads to action. Whoever believes in Jesus will do the works He had done. It's like saying your a vegetarian and only eating vegetables - the actions need to follow the statement of who you are. Christians follow Christ, and not in some weird follow-the-leader game kind of way, but by doing what He did, acting the way He acted.

Love God, love people.

Obedience – Day 3

James 2:18-22

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

I love this - faith and actions working together. We can't be lop-sided Christians only believing and not doing.

What did Jesus tell us in the Great Commission? Go!

What did God tell Moses to do? Go!

What did God tell Jonah to do? Go!

Christians, we are called to action, to live out our faith - go!