

## **Disciplines of the Disciple**

### ***Sunday: Overview – Walking worthily of our calling***

#### **The Process of Making Disciples**

Matthew 28:18-20

“And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. **Go therefore and make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age.”

The command to make disciples of all nations implies that they would teach, instruct, and guide converts to Christianity, leading them to observe all the things the Lord had urged upon them. The first disciples were called to take what they had learned and impart it to others.

This gave the Lord’s followers their “global mission statement” and established one of their purposes for existence.

- When you don't have a plan, things go haywire.
- Perhaps our Christian experience seems dry and unfocused is because we are dry and unfocused?
- In order to disciple others, we must be disciples ourselves, learning and practicing the disciplines of discipleship.

#### **Two Definitions**

##### 1. Disciple

...from the Merriam-Webster dictionary

- one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another; such as:
  - .one of the twelve in the inner circle of Christ's followers according to the Gospel accounts
  - .a convinced adherent of a school or individual

...from Vine’s Greek dictionary

<A-1, Noun, 3101, *mathetes*>

literally, “a learner” (from *manthano*, “to learn,” from a root math---, indicating **thought** accompanied by **endeavor**)

it denotes “one who follows one's teaching,” as the “disciples” of John, Matt. 9:14; of the Pharisees, Matt. 22:16; of Moses, John 9:28; it is used of the “disciples” of Jesus

(a) in a wide sense, of Jews who became His adherents, John 6:66; Luke 6:17, some being secretly so, John 19:38;

(b) especially of the twelve Apostles, e.g., Matt. 10:1; Luke 22:11;

(c) of all who manifest that they are His “disciples” by abiding in His Word, John 8:31; cp. John 13:35; 15:8;

(d) in the Acts, of those who believed upon Him and confessed Him, John 6:1,2,7; 14:20,22,28; 15:10; 19:1, etc.

So, disciples were not only pupils but adherents; **hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher; cp. John 8:31; 15:8.**

##### 2. Discipline

...from the Merriam-Webster dictionary

- training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character
- control gained by enforcing obedience or order; an orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior
- a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity

...from Vine's Greek dictionary

- an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, or to self-control
- tutorage, education or training; by implication, disciplinary acts of correction, instruction and nurture

### **Goals for a Disciple**

Matthew 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,..."

This is a relationship goal. At the same time, there is some rigor to it: being a devotee of a master. However, we often want the relationship without the rigor.

Jesus Christ took his disciples on an educational journey with the intent that they would learn of Him and from Him in preparation for their life's mission and the great commission.

During these Bible study sessions we want to highlight five disciplines for disciples. Jesus Himself took the original disciples through the first four of these. They are:

- 1) The Scriptures
- 2) Prayer
- 3) Stewardship
- 4) Service
- 5) Worship

This is not an exhaustive list. Others, such as fasting and witnessing, are often considered as well. The common characteristic of all these disciplines is that they help to mold us into imitators of Christ as we follow His teaching and His behavior.

## **Disciplines of the Disciple**

### ***Tuesday: Getting the most out of Bible study***

#### **The Power of Understanding**

John 6:60-69

- Many stopped following Christ because they did not understand His words
- But they are life-giving and essential; where else could disciples go?
- They reveal the Christ, the Son of the Living God

#### **The necessity and the power of understanding the Scriptures**

-a foundational exercise for the disciple; for example:

Jeremiah 26 - Jeremiah was threatened; the elders recalled Micah/Hezekiah (100 yrs before)  
Hezekiah was heeded then, so the people spared Jeremiah now

They used the Scriptures to assess the situation and determine how to act

1 Timothy 4:13 - read purposefully and regularly in order to know the Word of God

2 Timothy 3:4, 16 - “continue in what you have learned;” understanding is expected  
doctrine = what’s right; reproof = indication we have gone wrong;  
correction = how to get right; instruction in righteousness = how to stay right

Acts 8 - if the Ethiopian didn’t understand the reading, he couldn’t receive the gospel

Psalm 119 - several times the word of God is called “life;” God-breathed, as at creation

The Bible is a divine communiqué directly to us. What do you do with a letter from someone important to you? You read it with intense interest.

### **Every aspect of service for the Lord requires understanding.**

- evangelists must explain it
- those with responsibility in leadership should labor in the word and in teaching (1 Timothy 5:17)
- any servant of the Lord must be capable of teaching (2 Timothy 2:24).
- the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude); that is, we seek historically orthodox Christianity; be wary of some new understanding of the Bible

Which translation is best? There are different translation methods.

- “dynamic equivalence,” thought-for-thought translation; maximize contemporary expression
- “complete equivalence,” word-for-word approach; maximize literal expression to varying degrees
- some advantages in complete equivalence approach, but essential point is to read and grow
- Bible translators generally revere God’s Word, and differences usually come from challenging passages, not hidden agendas
- we can trust that the Bible has been preserved; far more manuscripts of the Bible exist than any other writing from antiquity

### **The Process of Understanding**

There are reasons we may not be getting the most out of our Bible reading and study. This list (from Jen Wilken in her book *Women of the Word*) suggests six wrong approaches that may factor into a less than positive experience in Bible understanding.

1. **Xanax Approach** – The Bible exists to make me feel better. This treats the Bible as a book about me, and I only feel I have gotten something out of it when I feel good about what I have read.  
*Problem: Large portions of the Bible and large categories of instruction will be ignored.*
2. **Pinball Approach** – Just open to any passage and hope to receive something by random selection.  
*Problem: The Scriptures were not put together that way. There is context, setting, history, and authorship.*
3. **Magic 8 Ball Approach** – Using the Scriptures simply to “get answers” to life’s big questions.  
*Problem: This ignores the impact of the Bible on the day-to-day details of life.*
4. **Personal Shopper Approach** – I am concerned about a specific topic, so I assemble all the verses that may speak to the problem.  
*Problem: This only yields partial knowledge overall and may be isolated from the whole revelation of the Scriptures.*
5. **Telephone Game Approach** – After reading a passage, turn immediately to a commentary or Youtube video to find what my favorite commentator or teacher says about the text.

*Problem: I am to learn to love the Lord with **my** mind, not my favorite author's mind.*

6. **Jack Spratt Approach** – Selective reading at the exclusion of major books/passages. (In an old nursery rhyme, Jack Spratt ate only certain foods and nothing else.)

*Problem: There will be a dearth of knowledge of the Scriptures as a whole.*

### **The right way to study: Nehemiah 8:8**

- read distinctly; give the sense; understand the reading
- observation; interpretation; application

**In observing**, seek the **context**—an extremely important starting point. The key building block of the Scriptures is the **paragraph**; be careful about taking phrases or verses out of context. Seek also to know who and what is involved; identify the setting and events that surround the passage.

**In interpreting**, seek the meaning of the passage intended for the people who were going to read it. This includes the style of genre (historical, poetic; literal, figurative; etc.). An English dictionary and other resources can help with the meaning of terms. Remember that any interpretation will fit with the overall message and fabric of the Bible.

- 2 Peter 1:20-21            there is no *private* interpretation or source of meaning
- That is, it is not just personal; it is in keeping with the divine message.

Seek to learn the key doctrines of the Bible, such as:

- Who is God, and what is His character?
- What impact does the problem of sin have on our relationship with God?
- What are the teachings about salvation and its related themes (justification, sanctification, etc.)?
- What are the differences between Israel and the Church?
- What is God's timeline of past, present, and future events?

In general, the interpretation will be found in the text itself, not in symbols, figures, types, numbers, meanings of names, etc. These supplements can provide helpful or interesting applications, but they are generally not the primary interpretation. Noah's experience of deliverance was "*also*" a figure, 1 Peter 3:20-21.

**In making application**, seek to know the response which *the Scriptures are inviting you to have* as you read them. The word "understand" in Nehemiah is related to the idea of "weaving together." Weave the Scriptures into your own life.

Romans 15:4            encouragement and hope

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11    warning and admonition

...expect the Bible to speak to you! It has a message of strength and also of protection.

- Application is sometimes about something to do or not do.
- It is also sometimes just to make us more aware of who God is and put us in awe of Him.

The principle of **meditation before media**

- Give the Word of God a priority in daily life

Does the Bible seem to be simply some big book? In a vision, Ezekiel was given a scroll to eat, but it became sweet when it was inside of him. Eat the scroll! Read the Bible! Just start doing it, and it will become sweet.

## Disciplines of the Disciple

### Wednesday: Prayer – more than asking

Prayer is perhaps the most written about and the least practiced Christian activity.

-it is simply communicating with God

#### The first record of prayer, Genesis 4

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, v. 16

The family of Seth (after his son was born) began to call on the name of the Lord, v. 26

-prayer arises in a difficult day, because we can still depend on God

#### It's one of the first evidences of the Christian life

-Paul was praying, Acts 9:11 --although he had been religious before

-it is “the autograph of the Holy Spirit upon the believer” (C. Spurgeon)

-intimacy with God

-like an oxygen tank for a diver, we breathe prayer because we are in an unnatural environment

-living without prayer implies we have “need of nothing” (Revelation 3)

-and it implies that we don't believe God answers prayer

#### Seven aspects of prayer:

lifting up your soul to God - Psalm 25:1, 143:8

pouring out your heart to God - Psalm 62:8

crying out to God - Psalm 86:3

sending spiritual incense up to God - Revelation 5:8

coming before God's throne of grace - Psalm 84:1-2, Hebrews 4:16

offering a spiritual sacrifice to God - Hebrews 13:15

drawing close to God - James 4:8

Prayer is the upreach that gives boldness for outreach because there has been an inreach.

#### How to pray

The A C T S pattern for prayer (Adoration Confession Thanksgiving Supplication)

There are *closet prayers* for our personal lives, *public prayers* on behalf of others, and *arrow prayers* that are immediate statements of need at the moment.

**Luke 11** is a pattern, a model prayer for disciples, who said to the Lord, “Teach us to pray.”

-a certain place: an intentional activity, a specific place, a solitary place

-Father the place of access and nearness, Ephesians 2:18

-hallowed name holy, sanctified; supremely unique; “there is no name like Yours”

-kingdom come think of God's point of view; His desires done on earth as in heaven

→ These are in the verb tense of “let it be this way for me”—they are truths, but the prayer is that we will be changed by the reality of these truths.

- daily bread                      repetitive, daily dependence  
     “us”—a collective pronoun  
     The words we use to pray will flavor the way we experience prayer.
- forgiveness                      There is *positional* forgiveness (we are forgiven through Christ);  
     but this is *relational* forgiveness (we must forgive if God will bless us).  
     Many times assemblies struggle because of grudges and unforgiveness.  
     It is linked with the marriage relationship, 1 Corinthians 7  
     Mark 11:25    an attitude of forgiveness even before repentance comes
- deliverance                      There is evil and “the evil one” from whom we need deliverance.

Luke 11 continues with persistence in prayer and the promises of prayer.

Another important passage is **1 Timothy 2**.

- intentional praying for all
- supplication                      asking for specific responses from God
- prayers                              maintaining the relationship; “evening, morning, noon”; “unceasing”
- intercessions                      solidify friendships by praying for each other
- giving thanks                      if I’m complaining, I’m not thankful

All this is under the umbrella of praying with God’s honor in mind. We pray because we want Him to be honored.

**Fasting** is frequently linked with prayer in the Old and New Testaments. It’s a period of self-denial of some sort (most often food, but it is not exclusively that), and the time previously devoted to something else is used for prayer.

## Disciplines of the Disciple

### *Thursday: Stewardship and service*

#### Stewardship

A steward is a person responsible for another person’s business; a manager, an overseer of a house, a distributor. Do we manage well? 1 Corinthians 10:26 – “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”

- 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6-7                      -we *are* stewards, because we have received something  
     -we must be faithful *with* that and be faithful *to* the master
- 1 Timothy 6:20                                  -protect from misuse what is given (money, possessions, time, abilities)
- Genesis 24:56                                  -the servant says, “do not hinder me”  
     -there is a task to be done for the master, and that guides our agenda

### **Parable of the unjust steward, Luke 16:1-11**

The steward in the parable was commended not because he was unjust (that was already dealt with) but because he had acted shrewdly. In the context of the parable, the master was pleased because at least he had gotten some income from his debts. (Probably the steward offered a discount for immediate payment; or perhaps he deducted his personal commission in order to encourage payment.) The steward is pleased, too, because he has gained friends who will later help him out.

The Lord uses this example to make the following points:

1. *“The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”*  
Why? Because future events are foreseen and prepared for; investing now for future gains.
2. *“Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”*  
Use money not for self-gratification but for investing is what will have enduring value.
3. *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”*  
There is progressive increase in responsibility – be faithful in what seems like little things.
4. *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall entrust to you the true riches?”*  
There is a direct correlation with the stewardship of money and spiritual treasures.
5. *“If you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?”*  
What we have is not really ours anyway. And it’s not about what we don’t have; it whether we are faithful with what we do have.

Stewardship of time: Paul twice wrote about redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5).

Stewardship of abilities: God asked Moses, “What is in your hand?” (Exodus 4:2).

### **Service**

Stewardship of spiritual gifts is essentially our service for the Lord among fellow believers.

1 Peter 4:10 – Everyone has received a spiritual gift; minister it to one another *as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*. “Identify what I’m good at and then get on with it.”

2 Corinthians 4:5-7 – Live this way even if there is uncertainty about a personal gift; reveal God’s glory through Jesus Christ.

### **Mindset of service**

NT “service” has two words -being an attendant; waiting on others; running errands (same as deacon)  
-being a slave, being in servitude to others

We are living in a time where self has taken center. We tend to look at everything from the perspective of “What is in it for me? What do I get out of this?”

The disciple of Jesus Christ has a different approach –

How can I help? How can I make your situation better?

### **Christ the example**



Matthew 12:18	“Behold, My Servant!”
Matthew 20:38	“I came to serve”
Luke 22:27	“I am among you as one who serves” and the example to follow
John 6:38	“I came to do the will of the One who sent Me”

### **Service to the Lord and to others**

These go together.

First, **fervent in spirit, serving the Lord** (Romans 12:11). Our daily routine is service to Christ (Ephesians 6:5-6, Colossians 3:23-24).

Malachi 3:14-15      Some said, “It is useless to serve God! The wicked seem to be the blessed ones.” Expecting to get something out of our service creates this attitude. God is worthy of our service regardless of the response made towards us.

2 Corinthians 8:5      The Thessalonians “first gave themselves to the Lord” and then served others from that perspective.

Martha focused on her service instead of the one she served, Luke 10.

It’s also a danger to think that service for the Lord is a special task for only a few.

Second, serving the saints.      Hebrews 6:10 – look for opportunities  
    Galatians 5:13 – by love serve one another  
    Galatians 6:10 – do good to *all* (especially the household of faith)

## **Disciplines of the Disciple**

### ***Friday: Worship – a personal, life-long response to God***

Worship is a grateful and joyful response of the heart to God when it is filled with His greatness.  
 -a reverent response in His presence

Genesis 24 – worshiped and bowed the head; Revelation 4, 5, 7 – worshiped and fell down

### **The True Character of Worship**

#### **John 4:20-24**

Worship is “in spirit and in truth.” Truth means “not hidden.”

We cannot worship fervently if something is hidden in our lives.

Psalm 51:6      truth in our inner being; purged and washed; then joy and gladness follow  
*then* “open my lips” in response (v. 15)



When the woman in John 4 spoke truly (v. 18), then the teaching of worship in spirit and truth could be presented.

It's a matter of **authenticity** and **fidelity** (in truth). The hypocrites (Matthew 15:7-9) worshiped only with their lips. We have to *know* what is true and be *faithful* to it, too.

Genesis 22 – worship first appears in the Bible here; it flows out from love and flows into obedience

Exodus 20 and Matthew 22 – “love the Lord your God with all you are”

Worship “in spirit” implies that our whole being is responsive to God; we aren’t just following a habit or custom.

Mark 7:7 – Avoidance of empty (vain) worship. “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

We are designed to seek an object of worship. But Nimrod (Genesis 10, 11) was brash before the Lord and led the people to build a tower that would help them make a name **for themselves**. This led to the worship of Babel, considered the starting point of Babylon.

What do we think of in our quiet moments? Is it ourselves?

We want to cultivate a heart that worships the Lord; the will is involved, but also the heart.

**Who worships?** It's the priests.

**1 Peter 2:4-10**

The **holy priests** see that He is precious; the heart is involved.

A verbal response in public worship is only a momentary aspect of worship. Worship is continuous, in the Lord's presence, appreciating His preciousness. A number of people worshiped the Lord Jesus in the gospels, and only occasionally is their worship defined in words. However, they nearly always fell or kneeled in His presence, overwhelmed with His greatness.

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. The wise men ( <b>fell</b> down, gifts)                                | Matthew 2            |
| 2. The leper ( <b>kneeled</b> down, Mark 1)                               | Matthew 8 / Mark 1   |
| 3. Jairus, saying “you can make her live” ( <b>fell</b> at feet, Mark 5)  | Matthew 9 / Mark 5   |
| 4. Disciples worshiped, saying “You are the Son of God”                   | Matthew 14           |
| 5. Canaanite woman, saying “Lord, help me” ( <b>fell</b> at feet, Mark 7) | Matthew 15 / Mark 7  |
| 6. Mother of James / John ( <b>kneels</b> - though this seems calculated) | Matthew 20           |
| 7. The women after resurrection (held His <b>feet</b> )                   | Matthew 28           |
| 8. The disciples after resurrection                                       | Matthew 28 / Luke 24 |
| 9. The demoniac ( <b>fell</b> down before Him, Luke 8)                    | Mark 5 / Luke 8      |
| 10. Soldiers mocked worship ( <b>bowing</b> the knee)                     | Mark 15              |
| 11. Blind man said “I believe” <b>and</b> worshiped                       | John 9               |

Philippians 3: we worship God in the spirit. It's all the time. Saying “Let us worship” when offering a prayer can be misleading because it implies that worship is going to start at that moment and stop when the prayer is done. It is not a Sunday morning-only activity!

1 Peter 2 also presents the **royal priests** who proclaim Christ's praises to others. This is as aspect of worship that serves God.

Acts 16: Paul and Silas praised God (as holy priests) and witnessed to the jailer (as royal priests)

Romans 12:1 presenting our bodies as living sacrifices is a spiritual act of worship

“To worship is to quicken the **conscience** by the holiness of God, to feed the **mind** with the truth of God, to purge the **imagination** by the beauty of God, to open the **heart** to the love of God, to devote the **will** to the purpose of God.”

- William Temple

Our whole being responds to God at every moment:

Conscience: Hebrews 10:2,22

Mind: Romans 15:6; 12:2

Imagination: Ephesians 1:18

Heart: Ephesians 3:17

Will: Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 6:3

“If we are not what we should be as worshipers all week, we won’t be what we should be on Sunday.”

- Grant Steidl, *Growing in God’s Word*