

Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

Assumptions

John 10:10

April 02, 2022

We are beginning a new series today on Discipleship entitled: Following in the Footsteps of Jesus.

A Disciple is a person who becomes the student of a specific teacher – in our case Jesus:

- **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. ¹⁹ **"Come, follow me,"** Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.
- **Matthew 9:9** - As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me,"** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.
- **John 8:30-32** - Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him. ³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Who, in turn, spreads the teachings / doctrines of his teacher to other people:

- **John 1:43-45** - The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, **"Follow me."** ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
- **Luke 10:1-2** - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
- **Matthew 28:18-20** - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Discipleship, then, is the activity / the process of following Jesus.

- **Counting the Cost - Matthew 16:24** - Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
- **Loving People - John 13:34-35** - "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- **Fruit Happens -**
 - **John 15:7-8** - If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
 - **Galatians 5:22-23** - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Are you frustrated with your *"discipleship"* experience?

- Is your faith microscopic? Perhaps more of a pew potato sort of faith and less of a walking sort of faith?
- Is your growth stagnant?
- Is the road harder than you thought it'd be? Do you wonder if you're actually on the road?
- Is it more drudgery and less victory?

And what about church?

- Is it boring and uninspired?
- Is it more about following rules than following Jesus? Are you more of an institutional disciple and less of a Jesus disciple?
- Is it more like a nursing home where old Christians go to die and less about a hospital where people go to find healing and restoration and transformation?

Are you content or do you long for something more? Something different? Something better?

It is my hope that you **ARE NOT** content with your personal discipleship experience and that you **DO** long for something better.

But, how do we move beyond a mere church attendance and gold star collecting type of *“discipleship”* to a vital, exciting, life changing, moving down the road sort of relationship with Jesus?

Let's start with assumptions.

We make assumptions every day and what we assume about any given situation can either help or hurt us.

Some people have become so derailed by their assumptions about the world outside their front doors that they literally never leave the house {agoraphobia}.

In our Christian walk, we also make incorrect assumptions:

- About God's heart, *“helped”* along by hypocritical and judgmental *“Christians”*, the insidious *“prosperity gospel”*, Satan's propaganda, and a generally negative world-view.
- About what it means to be a disciple. We assume that discipleship is an optional extra – that discipleship is for theologians and seminary students and not required for the run-of-the-mill Christian. That somehow the expectation of discipleship for those up front is different from those sitting in the pew.

In order to get to that something more, something different, something better, we have to start our discipleship journey with the right assumptions –

Firstly, regarding God's heart toward us:

- **Psalm 103:1-22** - Of David. Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children -- ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. ¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. ²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. ²² Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.
- **Jeremiah 29:11** - For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
- **Jeremiah 31:3** - The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.
- **1 John 4:8-10** - Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

This is not simply *“Okay”* News..... This **GREAT** News!!!

Listen to the awe in David's voice at his realization of God's heart toward him:

- **Psalm 8:3-4** - When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

So, God's heart toward **US** is one of love, compassion, tender mercy and abundant grace.

He looks at us through glasses tinted with Grace.

He knows **WE** are finite and broken beings and He is deeply and personally committed to restoring humanity – to restoring **YOU**.

Jesus was sent to earth to take your place and deal with the sin problem **BECAUSE** God loves you!!

The Holy Spirit was sent to teach, comfort, correct, guide and transform your life **BECAUSE** God loves you!!

Jesus is one day coming back with great glory and power to bring an end to the Villain and take you home **BECAUSE** God loves you!!

Secondly, regarding whom exactly is called to be a disciple:

The common thought amongst believers is that a **CHRISTIAN** is someone who has accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and has received the promise of eternal life through faith – nothing more required except adhere to church doctrine and wait for Jesus to come back....

A **DISCIPLE**, on the other hand, is a more serious Christian. One who goes door-to-door, gives Bible studies, attends seminars for the fun of it, practices the spiritual disciplines, and is deeply invested in 12-step programs to *“better discipleship”*.

This has created a two-tiered Christian experience = your average Christian – who is not expected to make any effort to submit to or follow Jesus and your serious Disciple.

That could not be further from the truth. Nowhere in scripture will you find this two-tiered system.

Every Christian **IS** a Disciple of Jesus. Not a disciple of church doctrine. Not a 12-step program disciple. A disciple of Jesus. Discipleship is the centerpiece of the Christian experience. You cannot be one without being the other.

The moment you choose to journey with Jesus you step onto the road of discipleship. You start as a baby Christian moving steadily toward maturity, becoming more and more like Jesus with every step.

- **Psalm 25:4-5** - Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; ⁵ guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
- **Ephesians 4:11-15** - It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.
- **Bill Hull {The Complete Book of Discipleship pg. 33-34, 43}** - A disciple is a normal Christian who follows Jesus.... While people will follow Christ in different ways, no one should think that only the elite practice serious faith and no one should hold to the even more destructive idea that being a casual Christian – one who decides to believe in Jesus but not to follow Him – is somehow normal.... The problem we face is that we have created and taught a faith that does not transform people.... When Jesus commanded “Make disciples,” he wasn’t simply referring to converts. He wants followers to follow – people who submit to his teachings and his ways.

Stop carrying around a suitcase full of negative assumptions about God. Choose to see God as He is, the Lover of your soul and take the Psalmist up on his invitation:

- **Psalm 34:8** – Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Stop living in the false belief that you can be a Christian but not a Disciple.

Stop being content in the shallow end of the pool - venture out into the deep with Jesus.

Jesus has called you to Himself – to follow in **HIS** footsteps – to take the greatest journey of your life **WITH** Him:

When the discipleship road is full of laughter and joy and success – choose to believe that God is rejoicing with you.

When the discipleship road takes a sharp turn into hardships and valleys and tears – choose to believe that nothing can separate you from God’s love and that He is walking beside you working it all out for your eternal good.

When the discipleship road doesn’t look anything like you had planned – choose to remember that this world is not your home anyway and God has something in mind for you that is infinitely better than you can even imagine.

When you get detoured and wander down a different road – choose to believe that God is waiting.... He is longing.... He is eager for you to rejoin Him - welcoming you back with open arms.

When you’re tired and the journey has been long, remember that you are not alone:

- **Hebrews 12:1** - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

And that He, more than anyone, is looking forward to the end of the journey when He gets to say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! – WELCOME HOME!”* {Matthew 25:23}.