

Journal

SUMMER 2017

Matthew 28:18-20

DY

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Hey! This is your journal. Through the next four days there will be a planned-out time where everyone will go through these journals privately and then discuss them together in your Small Group. I hope that through it you will understand the process of discipleship a bit better.

What is a disciple?

If we are Christians then we are disciples, in fact Jesus Himself never used the term “Christian”, he called His followers, His disciples. A disciple is ‘a person who is a pupil of the doctrines of another’ (a follower). So essentially, a disciple is someone who is taught/trained by someone else who will pass down their teachings and beliefs.

Matthew 28:18-20 - **18** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19 Go therefore and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Making disciples is something that all of us must do. It is known as “The Great Commission”.

‘Co’ meaning “together” and ‘mission’ meaning “an important task or duty”. So, in others words this is not one man’s mission, it is a mission that Christ set for all of us to do.

Over the next four days, we are going to look at three stages of discipleship to help you fulfil your role in “The Great Commission”:

- Making sure you are in the right place.
- Being equipped as a leader.
- Go!

Day One: Who are You?

The first stage to discipleship is being in right relationship with God yourself. You can not lead and disciple others unless you are able to lead and disciple yourself.

How do you know you are in right relationship with God?

- Can you remember what you were like before you were a Christian?

A huge indicator as to whether you are in the right place with God is looking back at where you once were and seeing if you have changed and matured. At the point of salvation each person receives the Holy Spirit and once the Holy Spirit becomes part of you, you will change.

Let's take a look at a scripture to help you with this: **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. - 2 Corinthians 5:17**

There are two big truths in this statement to a believer; first he is 'in Christ', secondly he is a 'new creation'.

Let's look at the first truth - 'in Christ'

The first stage is 'without Christ'.

This is where we are born and nurtured, we are born not knowing Christ, we may hear about Jesus as we're growing up in several places, or in a lot of cases were raised in a Christian, home but until you are in relationship with Him you are without Him.

Think of it like being at a party with a huge buffet and you are hungry. The food is right in front of you, but staring at it won't satisfy your hunger. Until you reach out and grab the food, put it in your mouth, chew it, swallow it, you will be without it.

John 15:5 - 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

The next stage is 'in Christ'.

Read John 15:1-11

Jesus says He is the vine and we are the branches and that we should "Abide in Him."

If a branch is cut off from the vine what happens to it? It dies.

If the branch is rooted in the vine what happens? It grows and produces fruit.

It would be useless for the branches to just be attached to the trunk on the outside, by means of rope or another method, because it wouldn't be able to draw any sustenance from it. The branch has to be IN the trunk, attached to the stem (vine) for it to live.

Thereby saying that; if we are attached to ("in Christ") Jesus' sustenance, Jesus' very life, flows into us, and because His life flows into us we then start to become like Him and therefore begin to produce fruit like Him for God's glory.

The third stage is ‘with Christ’.

There are scriptures in the Bible that show we are with Christ and Christ is with us.

The event of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
(Daniel 3)

Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit, to be with us -
Read John 14:16-17.

What does this mean for us?

God’s will will be revealed to us - **Read Ephesians 1:9.**

We can receive the Spiritual Gifts - **Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-9.**

It means we can walk and live in confidence and assurance
- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:3-5**

Questions:

1. Have you noticed a change in yourself since you accepted Jesus? - Discuss
2. We mentioned that **John 15** explains how we are ‘in Christ’ and that we must abide/remain ‘in Christ’ - how do we do that?
3. Can you give an example of Christ being ‘with’ you? - Discuss

Day Two: Who are You? Continued

Now let's look at the second truth 'he is a "new creation"'.

Again there are three thoughts to this, the first is that we are subject to "radical change".

There are many changes someone can partake in, for example, change of style, change of language (teenage slang to adult English), maybe even a change in behaviour.

I remember going from year eleven to sixth form, somehow, miraculously, during the summer holiday everyone in my year thought they had "grown up" and "matured" just because we were given the title of "sixth formers" and by wearing a suit, as if the suit was the catalyst from us being teenagers to men/ woman.

However, these changes are not strong enough to say, 'he is a new creation'.

There are many examples in the Bible where there has been a radical change; Lazarus who was raised from the dead. He went from dead to alive but yet he was still Lazarus.

Job went in the Jordan river and was healed - yet he was still Job.

Even these examples are not enough to be considered a 'new creation'.

So what is?

Let's think about **regenerating** your home. When we decorate, we tend to just paint over the wall paper and paint over the bad patches but eventually it will all start to show through the paint.

It's not enough just to paint over the bad areas but we must get rid of them; we must tear down the wall paper, sand off and smoothen the wall, we must fill in the cracks for it to become **regenerated**.

It is the same for us as Christians. We can not just change our appearance on the outside and just cover up our bad areas, we must be regenerated from the inside out. Which means tearing down those strongholds, chiselling away at our imperfections and sanding off those rough edges so that, on the inside and the outside, we are **new**.

The apostle Paul is a massive example of this. He was

a murderer of Christians, it was his job, he was paid to assassinate them. Yet God revealed Himself to Paul, regenerated him, put him under **radical change** and the product that came from the process was one of the most influential men who has set foot on this Earth.

Someone who newly finds Christ, in the process of becoming a new creation, part of this is receiving God's love into his soul and the Bible teaches us that God's love input into our soul expels our love to sin. The process probably goes something like this: Someone who does not know God, does not know His love, His goodness, His kindness, but once they receive Christ, the Holy Spirit reveals God's love and His heart, which then softens our hard heart towards God, which then, starts to **radically change** our heart, our affections, our desires.

Notice how your desires have changed.

These changes did not happen because God turned up in our bedroom and told us face to face to stop having these desires/doing these things, but it was by our choice that we stopped because God had created

us as new which meant our thought life had radically changed and we did not want to do these things anymore.

Read Ephesians 4:31.

This scripture can not be done in your own strength, it can only be done through God's, which takes us to the next point.

The second thought is a 'divine working'.

God is Creator. He created ALL things, man has made nothing.

Have you ever created anything?

Yes? Where did the resources come from?

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

This is so with us being a new creation. God and God alone is the only being capable of doing this. It can not be done in our own strength.

The third thought is 'a remarkable freshness'.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-11/16.

We will be afflicted, we will be perplexed, persecuted, struck down and our bodies, our outer self, is wasting away but God is renewing us day by day He is making us fresh day by day by day.

Read John 4:13-14

At a spring the water is always flowing which means it's always fresh and healthy. It's where we get our bottled water from, from springs where the water is pure and we are able to drink it. Jesus has promised us that when we follow Him and become a **new creation**, spiritually, we will never be thirsty and we will always be fresh and hydrated because there is a spring inside us which is constantly flowing; which will attract people, like a well, and then they too can have this spring form inside them.

Concluding point:

- Examine yourselves -

Are you living as a new creation?

If you have accepted Christ and are in Christ - this means walking with Him daily, reading His word, surrendering yourself to Him - then you are a **new creation!** Full stop! End of! This means you no longer

have to live as the world tells you to live, you no longer are a slave to the world but you are made new, you are restored, you are fresh! God doesn't look at you as a sinner and in condemnation because 'the old has passed away and the new has come', He doesn't see what you used to be, but instead He sees you as brand new; clean, fresh. This should excite you and it should cause a new hope inside you at the thought of knowing that God Himself is working on/in you. Jesus came that we may have life and life to the full so let's start living in our position, as new creatures, created completely free and alive in Christ.

Questions:

1. Do you know/believe you are a new creation? Discuss.
2. What does it mean to you knowing you are a new creation? Discuss.
3. What effect has knowing you are a new creation had on you practically? (The way you think, live your life etc) Discuss.
4. Has there been a 'radical change' in you since you became a new creation? Give examples.

Day Three: Getting Equipped

We would hope that the person (maybe people) who disciplined you through stage one of discipleship will take you through stage two, to equip you as a leader to go and make more disciples however, the truth is, the best person to equip you as a leader is... yourself!

Of course your mentor(s) will help you, and teach you things to grow you as a leader but a good leader is one who leads him/herself. This does not mean you no longer need your mentor, remember, they are steps ahead of you and still have many things they can teach you but leadership is taught so you must be willing to learn.

What is a leader?

A leader is someone who can help move someone from where they are another step closer to where they need to be.

What are some characteristics of a leader?

Here are some (there are probably many more) characteristics of what I believe make a good leader (thank you to Vlad for helping with this list):

1. A leader has a strong relationship with God.
2. A leader should be able to lead themselves.
3. A leader is serving the needs of those he/she leads.
4. A leader is selfless.
5. A leader provides a safe context within which people are being developed and are growing for example, Baseline, it is a safe environment for you to discover your gifts and test them.
6. A leader has people following them (without force) - leadership should come from respect, not fear.
7. As mentioned above, leadership is about helping people understand their present context while helping them move towards where they need to be.
8. A good leader creates leaders, not followers.
9. A good leader is consistent.
10. Good leaders understand the bigger picture, they do not just look at the “here and now”.
11. A good leader should always remain teachable.
12. A good leader makes choices and lives by wisdom, not his/her emotions.
13. As Craig Groeschel says: ‘People would rather follow a leader who is always real.’ - be who God created YOU to be, do not try and become another leader you admire, be yourself.

Quick Leadership Tip:

One of the best tips I can give you in how to be a great leader is to ALWAYS remain humble. A great leader is not the most charismatic, the one who can draw in the most people, the loudest or even the one with the most followers, the best leaders are the most humble. Why? When you are humble, God will lift you up, **James 4:10**.

Leadership is a huge area to cover and will take a life time of searching and discovery. I believe there is a leader in each of us, some are called to lead ones, some tens, some fifties, some hundreds, some thousands etc, which every capacity of leadership you are called to is just as important as the others so I encourage you to push yourself to always become a better leader and to always be leading someone, which we will look at how to tomorrow.

Questions:

1. How do I look after myself as a leader?
2. What opportunities are there in your life that you can take to grow your leadership?
3. How are you going to do it?

Day Four: Go!(ing)

The third stage to discipleship is to “Go!”

Just as someone, or maybe a group of people, has gone through and taught you the first two stages, now you need to “Go!” and do the same.

There are many statements we could find defining the term leader but there are two in particular I really like that fit with discipleship:

14. show (someone or something) the way to a destination by going in front of or beside them.

15. be a route or means of access to a particular place or in a particular direction.

These two statements are great together because they indicate a truth about leadership which I feel is overlooked a lot of the time.

Leadership is not about someone leading someone to themselves, or to become the same as them. We all have different personalities, characters, callings, gifts, God has not created us to be the same. So, a leader’s role is to help someone end up where God wants them to. This could be a similar place that you

are in, you may be a Pastor one day and you may take someone under your wing who also has a calling to be a Pastor, but there will be many other people under your wing who have a different calling. I can not lead someone to be a worship leader because that is not part of my gifting BUT I can lead them to someone who can.

Leadership is not about holding onto people, it's about going through stage one and two with them and then sending them out.

A perfect example is of course Jesus. He spent three years with His disciples, equipping them for when He left and had to send them out - **Matthew 28:19-20**.

Another example of this is in **Read John 1:35-37**.

In just these two verses we get two lessons we need to learn about discipleship:

1. Your disciples need to be following Jesus, not you.
2. There may come a time when you need to hand

them over to someone else.

We read that two of John's disciples were with him but when Jesus came, John told them who Jesus was and happily handed them over to Jesus. Your disciples belong to Him not you, if Jesus one day calls them somewhere else, you should encourage them to go, do not hold onto them. This is not easy, especially if you spend many years walking with someone, but if God calls them to go, then they must go.

In **Matthew 28:19** Jesus tells us to go and make disciples. End of! It does not say, if you want to, if you feel like it, if you can be bothered. No. It is commanded of us. Every one of us needs to be committed to bringing more people to Christ. In every place you are put in, in school, college, university, your job, your hobby environment, there must always be a mind-set in your heart of, "Who is there in this place that can become my disciple for Christ?". Our entire lives must be dedicated to creating disciples for Him and this is summed up in my favourite scripture - **Philippians 1:20-22**.

A Word of Encouragement:

When you get to this stage, you may feel like you are not able to lead, you may feel like you do not have enough experience, but the only criteria you need to be able to disciple and lead someone else is to be just one step ahead of them so you can show them how you got there.

How to Disciple:

Discipleship is typically a long journey with someone and each person will be at a different stage and will have a different personality so there is no one way to disciple everyone, but here is a quick step guide to which I think we can follow to help us disciple anyone:

1. Am I able to help this person? - Are they very musical but I am very sporty? Would another person I know who is musical be better matched to help them? If no, try and introduce them to the other person to take over. If yes, move on to step two.
2. Identify where they are on their journey - are they a Christian yet? If yes, are they baby Christians

or further along? If no, what can I do to get them to that point?

3. Once you have identified where they are, ask yourself, what was I like when I was at that stage? What helped me to get to the next stage? Then go through that stage with them.

4. Continue the journey from there. You should always stay at least one step ahead of the person you are discipling, if they “overtake you”, then there is probably something wrong with your relationship with God that needs addressing. Do not mistake that however for someone being called somewhere else, that does not necessarily mean they have “overtaken” you, it is just a different calling to yours.

This four-step guide should be able to help you as you begin your discipleship journey. I know it does not answer all the questions, people you are discipling might go through stuff that you never went through but as long as you are continuing to grow your relationship with God and grow your leadership, I am sure you will be able to help them, and remember there is nothing wrong with asking your mentor to help you.

I hope this journal has helped you understand the importance of discipleship and has encouraged you how to do it and that you can do it. I pray that as you move along your own journey with Christ that you are bold and take each opportunity you get to help others walk on their own journey.

