

Discipleship Demands Doing
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All of this year we've been in a sermon series called Forward in Faith. In this series we are using the word FORWARD as an acrostic. Follow – Obey – Reach – Worship – Abide – Resist – Disciple
 These are the actions we must take to move forward in discipleship.

Today we are beginning the last section on the word Disciple. As we have learned, being a disciple maker is the goal of your life and the purpose of your life. Yes, you must do other things – but making disciples is a priority.

We get this from Jesus Himself. Right before He ascended into Heaven, He told His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

As we have seen, this command is for all believers for all time and that means it's for you! Jesus wants you to be a disciple maker! But first, you must become a disciple and there are things that disciples must do. So I'm preaching today a message entitled Discipleship Demands Doing.

I really agonized over that title because I know some people will immediately be turned off by it. They are the ones that say we are human beings not human doings. They are the ones who only speak of positional truth – who we are in Christ – but not about the truth of the need to change our condition.

We don't do to become born again – we believe. We are saved by faith, not by works. But once we are saved there are works for us to do and faith without works is dead! Remember there's a difference between being a believer and a disciple. Believers are saved and going to heaven, but many believers never become disciples because they never progress beyond infancy because they do not do what Jesus said to do.

Discipleship is about life change and that means you must change some things you do! By the way – teaching is part of discipleship. But if you don't put teaching into action, all you receive is information not transformation.

Remember, in Bible times a disciple is one who sits at the feet of another – to learn what they know and to become who they are. Life transformation requires faith, vision and action. A true disciple is a doer of the word, not just a hearer. And the goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus Christ. That requires more than information – it requires life transformation.

So, I want to expand your view of discipling – it’s not just one on one. It also happens through worship and sermons and small groups and classes.

Some Christians think discipleship is just about learning and memorizing. Yes – we need to know what Jesus said. But we need to do what Jesus said!

When my children were younger and living at home – if I told them to clean their room – and I checked on them later and the room was still messy – I would ask them if they heard what I said. And if they said, “Yes, I heard you, I would ask “Why didn’t you do it?”

If they said, “But Dad, I even memorized what you said,” but they didn’t do what I said, I would still not be happy. And if they said, “Dad, I even memorized it in biblical Greek,” I would still not be happy!

And as followers of Christ – we must not settle for hearing His word, knowing His word, or even memorizing His Word. We must do His word! In fact, Jesus said in Luke 6:46

Why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say?

Jesus expects His followers to do what He says. And discipleship is learning what He said in order to do what He said in order to become like Him!

This is why when we preach something – we don’t want to give a superficial overview of the topic – we want to dive deep in the word and spend time really getting the message inside us and worked into our lives. And we want to help you do what we’ve taught.

So – I want to review today what we’ve taught over the last 20 weeks and I want you to get honest with yourself about whether or not you are being a doer of the word, not just a hearer. Whether you are being a disciple – a follower of Christ – or you are just someone who believes in Christ, but doesn’t really follow Him.

We started out teaching on what it means to follow Christ. Once we are born again, we begin a life-long process of following Christ called discipleship. So ask yourself – Are you truly following Jesus? Are you following His example, obeying His commands and being transformed into His image? Are you becoming more like Him?

After teaching on following Christ, we taught on the blessing of obeying Christ. Are you truly obeying Him, or are there areas in your life where you are living in disobedience.

By the way – obeying Christ includes obeying His command to make disciples. Are you obeying that?

Then we taught on reaching others for Christ. We cannot disciple people until they become believers. We can't teach them until we reach them. Are you witnessing? Are you sharing your faith with others?

Then we taught how worship is a big part of discipleship. Discipleship begins with beholding the Lord. We must behold the Lord in the Word, behold the Lord by the Spirit, behold the Lord in prayer, behold the Lord in His people and behold the Lord in our worship. Are you beholding the Lord?

Then we taught on the importance of abiding in Christ. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. So, apart from Him, we cannot become like Him. We abide in Christ by living in His word, in consistent prayer and in a lifestyle of worship. Are you doing that?

Then we taught on resisting the enemy. We have an enemy – Satan – who wants to keep us from being saved in the first place, but when we are saved – He wants to keep us from growing in Christ – from becoming a mature disciple of Christ.

So he constantly resists every step we take to grow in Christ. He resists you going to church – reading your Bible – praying – giving – serving – He resists your praise and worship – he resists you sharing your faith. So you must learn to resist the resistance! That's why we taught you to overcome passivity to put on your spiritual armor and to fight the fight of faith. Are you doing that?

I want to remind you that discipleship is a lifelong process. You never fully arrive. This is so important to understand because many believers are excusing themselves from making disciples because they don't believe they are ready yet. I know people in their 40's, 50's or older who still don't think they are ready to make disciples. And most of them have been in church for decades!

What I need you to understand is that one of the main ways you grow as a disciple is by helping other people grow!

One of the characteristics of great leaders and disciple makers is that they are learners. They are constantly seeking to learn and grow.
 You will never be a great leader unless you can first be a follower.
 You will never be in authority unless you first submit to authority.
 You will never give orders until you can first obey orders.
 You will never be a teacher until you are teachable.

There are many ways to learn – through reading, attending seminars – but one of the best ways is to be mentored by a great leader. That's what Jesus did! Mark 3:14-15 says

[Jesus] appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.

Jesus wants His disciples to be with Him – spend time in His presence and in His word – but He also wants to send them to go out and do the works of the kingdom.

Jesus always had His disciples with Him. Paul almost always had one or more people with him. When you read the Bible you almost never see Paul ministering alone. It was Paul AND Barnabas, Paul AND Titus, Paul AND Timothy. They traveled with him, watched what he did, and then were given assignments to see how well they were developing their potential.

Likewise, we need friends and mentors, who pour into our lives. We also need mentees – people we are pouring into. We need to be discipled and we need to make disciples. These things happen simultaneously!

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 – Paul said *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

Jesus said in Luke 6:40

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

The point is – not only will you know what your teacher knows, but you will become like your teacher. This is what happened with Paul and Timothy. Listen to 1 Corinthians 4:15-17

Even though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul said – I want you to become like me – that’s why I’m your father, not just your teacher. So – in order for you to become like me – I’m sending Timothy to you! What? How can that be?

Because Timothy had been discipled by Paul until he became like Paul! In effect – if you were listening to Timothy – you were hearing Paul. If you were looking at Timothy – you were seeing Paul.

This passage also gives us a broader picture of disciple making. It is not just teaching or instructing; it can also be a form of parenting.

We need mentors in every area of life – spiritually, relationally, financially, at work – at church – and at home.

As most of you know, I've not always been a pastor. I had great success in the business world. In my jobs, I always looked for someone who was further down the road from me to be my mentor. I didn't ask "Will you be my mentor?" I said – "I'm new at this and you've been successful at it for a while – do you mind if I call you occasionally for a little advice?" They always said yes and I called them whenever I needed some help.

Deb and I have always had friends in life and mentors in life. We've had marriage mentors, child-rearing mentors, financial mentors, church-planting mentors, leadership mentors. We wouldn't be where we are without them.

Each one of us needs a mentor - coach - if we are to be successful in life. Each one of us needs someone to look up to, a wiser, (usually) older, God-following guide who can help us find our way.

Who's your Paul? Who do you look up to? For me that person is Pastor Olen.

We all need a Paul – a mentor – and we all need a Timothy – a mentee. A "Timothy" is a protégé, an apprentice, a younger (usually), less mature version of yourself. We need someone to pour into us and someone we can pour into.

Helping others grow helps us to grow. It's the biblical principle of sowing and reaping. Proverbs 11:24-25 says:

Some people give much but get back even more. Others don't give what they should and end up poor. Whoever gives to others will get richer; those who help others will themselves be helped.

We normally apply this passage to giving money, and that is a correct application. But I believe sowing and reaping affects every area of our lives – including our spiritual growth. When we help others grow in their faith – we grow in our faith.

I know who gets the most out of my sermons, ME! I study all week and there are many things I learn that I don't have time to include in the sermon. So, if you want to learn... teach!

There are many people in churches who feel stagnant - they are not growing or changing. Usually, they blame the church, so they change churches. But eventually they feel stagnant at the new church and they stay in this continual cycle of changing churches not realizing that the problem is not the churches.

The problem is that they are like the Dead Sea rather than the Sea of Galilee. What do I mean by that?

When Deb and I went to Israel – 2 places we really wanted to see were the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is in a lush valley full of life – but the Dead Sea is in a dry barren area – nothing can grow in its dead water.

Both of these lakes are fed by the same Jordan River, but one is alive and one is dead. Why is that? The answer is the fact that the Jordan River flows into the north side of the Sea of Galilee and then flows out the south side. It then flows down to the Dead Sea where it has no outlet. It stops there. Because there is no outlet, the water in the Dead Sea is stagnant and cannot sustain life.

What we learn from that is this: Inlet + No Outlet = A Dead Sea
 Flowing in is not enough –there must also be flow through.
 Apply that to Christians and you get this: Inlet + No Outlet = Dead Christians.
 I don't mean physically dead, but spiritually dead.
 They feel stagnant and don't experience the fullness of life in the Spirit.

In John 7:37-38 Jesus said:

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Is the living water of God flowing into you and through you?
 Flowing in is not enough – there must be outlets and well as inlets.
 There must be flow through.

You will experience some growth by having a mentor – someone pouring into you
 - but you will receive more growth by having a mentee – someone you pour into.
 Remember – We all need a Paul – someone who pours into our life.
 And we all need a Timothy – someone we pour our lives into.
 To grow in faith, we must not only "take in" all we can, but we must also "give out" all we can to others!

Pastor Joe – how do I do that? Here are some ways to do that here:
 Children and youth ministry
 Small groups
 Grace Journey
 One on one discipleship
 Men's and women's breakfasts
 Serve on a ministry team

Small groups are a great place to find a mentor and be a mentor.
 If you tried groups and think you don't get anything out of it – maybe you need to be putting something into it!
 Maybe it's time for you to get out of the receiving mode and get into the giving mode!
 We need to be rivers, not reservoirs.
 We need to be channels of blessing.
 As Jesus said in Matthew 10:8 *Freely you have received, freely give.*

So many people think like this: I'm feeling spiritually stagnant – so I must need to read more Scripture or hear more sermons or go to another seminar.

Well – all those things are good – but I want you to know that what you probably need is not another sermon or seminar.

These Christians are like the Dead Sea. They have several "inlets" but no "outlets." To be disciple makers, we must not only "take in" all we can, but we must also "give out" in service to others!

Water must flow to stay fresh! If all you do is take in without giving out – you will become a stagnant pool with no life. This explains why many believers are not growing and lack spiritual life. You see, it's possible to attend church, listen to sermons, and read the Bible - and still not have a growing spiritual life.

You probably don't need more input - You need more output!
 You probably don't need to take in more – you need to release more!
 You probably don't need to receive more – you need to give more!
 Freely you have received – freely give!

God's given to you – so you give to others!
 God's blessed you – so you bless others!
 God's met your needs – so you meet the needs of others!
 God's forgiven you – so you forgive others!
 God's shown you grace and mercy – so you show grace and mercy to others!
 God has accepted you – so you accept others!
 God loves you – so you love others!
 God ministers to you – so you minister to others!

So, let the word of God flow into you and then let it flow out to others!
 Let the Spirit of God flow into you and then let it flow out to others!
 Discipleship demands doing so start doing the work of God's kingdom!