

## **Introduction**

Every Lord's Day is special, but there are those that are extra special. And this morning is one of those extra-special Lord's Days because of the joy of seeing believers in Christ who have come forward to publicly profess through baptism that they are disciples of Jesus. God has opened their eyes to the desperate condition of their souls as sinners. He has shone in their hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They have repented of sin and have trusted in Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation. They are denying themselves and are taking up their crosses to follow him. Baptism is a testimony to this reality.

So I am taking a week off from the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. I want us to consider this morning the important matter of discipleship. We talk about it a lot, but let's make sure we understand the essence and character of the portrait painted by the Lord with this rich concept. We're going to uncover several vital aspects of the big deal we call discipleship as we turn our attention to the first chapter of the gospel according to John.

[Read Text]

So we are wanting to have an understanding of the essential elements of discipleship. And the first element we see this morning is that . . .

### **I. Discipleship is Instructional.**

A. John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

John the Baptist had disciples. Jesus had disciples. But what is meant by the term disciple? A disciple is a person who accepts the teachings of a given individual. A disciple is a pupil, a student, a learner then of the person whose teachings they accept. John the Baptist was set apart from before his birth to be a prophet and forerunner of Jesus. He would pave the way for the coming Messiah. He went into the wilderness teaching and preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand and Messiah was near. He

called people to repent of their sin and be prepared for the Messiah's coming. John's disciples accepted what he preached. They believed it and they were getting ready for Messiah.

Right here in the text he instructs his disciples that Jesus is the one about whom he has been teaching and preaching. He had said it before and now he is saying it again. There he is. There is the lamb. The two disciples who heard him, good disciples that they were, they learned from him. They believed what he said, and they turned to go after Jesus.

B. So in the first instance it is important for us to affirm that discipleship is instructional. It is about learning. The Bible is a book of teaching. It is instructional. Discipleship is about recognizing the Savior to which it points and learning what it says.

The Apostle Paul had many disciples, no doubt, but one stands out. Paul considered Timothy his true child in the faith. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul exhorted his disciple, "What you have HEARD from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to TEACH others also." The task with which Timothy was entrusted was to teach what he had learned.

C. When you think of discipleship, you need to think learning, increasing in the knowledge of Christ, of God, of the gospel, of truth, and being transformed by that learning. Biblical discipleship means you never get out of school.

## **II. Discipleship is Imitational.**

A. When these two disciples heard John point out that Jesus was the lamb of God, what did they do? John says, "The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. They FOLLOWED him. Later, down in verse 43, we see Jesus approaching Philip, and he says to him, "Follow me."

B. Now when the two first followed Jesus, the idea is simply that they took off after him. Jesus was walking by and they took off to go be with him. But when Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me," it is clear he wants more than just someone to walk behind him. He is calling for him to be a disciple. A

disciple is a learner but also a follower, that is one who is transformed by what he learns so that his life becomes an imitation of the one he follows.

C. Again let me refer to Paul. He saw himself as a teacher but also as an example to the ones who followed Christ along with him. To the Corinthians he writes, "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ" (1 Cor 4:15-17). Later he says in the same letter, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

Discipleship is about learning, and it is about imitating the example set by the one of whom you are a disciple. Christ calls us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow him. Peter says that Christ called us to suffer. He left us "an example so that [we] might follow in his steps."

Discipleship is learning and living.

### **III. Discipleship is Directional.**

I say this because biblical discipleship is about more than just learning from somebody else and living like somebody else. Ultimately, it is learning from Jesus and living like Jesus. Every disciple is called to be a disciple-maker. Each one should be discipling others, teaching them and giving them an example to follow, but ultimately biblical discipleship is about making disciples who follow Jesus.

John said of Jesus, "there is the lamb of God," and the two followed Jesus. Andrew said to Peter, "we have found the Messiah," and brought him to Jesus. Philip found Nathanael and said, the one Moses and the prophets wrote about is Jesus. And they brought them to Jesus.

Discipleship is about leading others to follow Jesus. Jesus makes the difference. I had shared with you last Sunday about Gregg's sudden and sharp downturn. Sunday evening the family was gathered around him and Gregg and Anna's pastor was reading Scripture. And present in the room was a relative for whose soul our family has long been concerned. His

name is Brandon. Listen to what Brandon wrote on his FB page later last Sunday night:

As I came to check on Gregg Clanton, Anna Clanton and their two girls, the preacher said a verse that described Gregg perfectly. As it was being read I just thought to myself, "if I were in his place what would the pastor say about me?" As I was sitting there watching everyone grieve, I said, "Gregg is a man just like me; what does he have that I don't?" The answer to that question is JESUS...I just had God all over me; he told me that I needed JESUS. As I am thinking of how to talk to him [God], I start shaking, heart racing, and tears of joy start flowing. Thank you Uncle Gregg. bc of you I am no longer lost but I am found. I asked JESUS . . . to be my Lord and Savior. . . .

Discipleship is directional. God uses other people, but it is all about Jesus! For whom are you living? Who do you follow? Biblical discipleship is about following Jesus Christ. To follow him is to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him. It starts when you admit you are a sinner. You confess that you are a breaker of the law of God. You deserve his punishment eternally. But you hear the hope of the gospel. There is a substitute. A lamb has taken his place under the wrath of God for all who will come to him. Jesus is that lamb. God made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God in him. That is where it all starts. That is where these who will be baptized today have come. What about you? Have you come to see that Jesus is the one who makes all the difference? That you need him? Hear the promise of Jesus (John 5:24): "Truly, truly . . . whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life." Those who truly believe become Christ's disciples. They take up their crosses and follow Jesus.

#### **IV. Discipleship is Personal.**

A. There are marks of personal intimacy all over this passage. There is a relational closeness that is deep and rich.

It begins with Jesus when he asked the two what they were seeking. They replied, "Where are You staying?" to which He said, "Come and see." He was saying, "What are you after?" They replied, "Where are you putting

your head down?" Basically these guys were saying, "we want to come home with you. We want to spend some time with you in your personal space." Jesus said, "Come on; you'll see." And they stayed with him that day. Discipleship is not done at arms length. It is done heart-to-heart; one-to-one; person-to-person; in personal space.

B. Another mark of personal closeness occurs when Andrew brings his brother Peter to meet Jesus. Jesus looked at him and gave him a nickname. Giving somebody a nickname is personal.

C. And then there is the call that he gives Philip. "Come and follow me." Calling someone to follow you is personal; it is a call to spend lives together.

Jesus did discipleship personally. He was different than the other rabbis. With them, the prospective disciple would ask to follow, but Jesus went to the ones he wanted and called them personally to himself. His method of discipleship was different as well. Other rabbis would teach traditions, laws, and dogmatic principles more like what goes on in a classroom today. The rabbi's main goal was to impart knowledge.

Certainly Jesus imparted knowledge as well. He gave them commands and told His disciples that if they really loved Him, they would keep His commands. But Jesus did so much more than merely impart knowledge. He taught his disciples, but He also poured Himself into them and into their lives. He called His disciples His friends. They were sharing life together.

And this is the personal side of discipleship. Jesus spent roughly 3 years in public ministry, a ministry intended to impact the world. But the way in which He went about the task is striking. Instead of trying to amass a huge organization, He spent His time developing a small group into having a heart and a life like His.

Think about it. This was not about an institution. Jesus had three years with these men. Time was of the essence. The master teacher and Lord of the universe was setting up a group of people whom He would use to turn the world upside down. How did he do it? What was his approach? What He did was invest Himself in the lives of other people. It was personal.

As a disciple of Jesus, you didn't just learn laws and doctrines and rules and follow them. You'd give yourself in a relationship to Him and you stuck to his person. It was not about simply disseminating information, but literally walking with Christ.

Discipleship is personal! It is personal for Jesus. It's personal for us with Jesus, and it's personal for Jesus with us. It's not about mere head knowledge; it's about life. Every believer (every Christ follower) needs to be impacting one another as disciples. Discipleship does not take place in the context of a distant relationship which involves the passing of knowledge but rather in the context of lives rubbing up against one another to draw them closer to each other and closer to Jesus.

We do not need what Jesus didn't give His disciples: programs, procedures, and an institution. We need the same thing they needed: personal discipling relationships that build us up in Christ. So with whom are you personal about the person of Jesus? Family? Good. It ought to be that way, but life and vitality in the church depends on us being involved with each other the same way. We need to have intentional relationships, relationships determined and designed to build each other up. This is how Jesus did it, and it is a pattern that should guide us in making disciples.

## **V. Discipleship is Multiplicational.**

I want you to notice what happened in the lives of these who began to follow Jesus. Here is Andrew. He hears the testimony of John. He spends the day with Jesus and then what does he do? Look at verse 41. He FIRST found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus. Then there is Philip. Jesus finds Philip and says to him, "Follow me." And what does Philip do? He finds Nathanael and says, "we have found him; come and see."

To say discipleship is multiplicational is to say that if you are a disciple of Jesus, you will be pointing others to him as well. We have been called to witnesses of Christ, to be his ambassadors, to call a lost world to the only hope it has. Telling others about Jesus is the first step of discipleship.

## **Conclusion**

The most important things about who the church is and what the church need to do and be can be summed up in the phrase, "disciples of Jesus."

It is a great joy that these who are to be baptized this morning are proclaiming themselves disciples of Jesus. What a fitting time for every Christ-follower to be reminded who we are. And what better time than right now for you who are not following to deny yourself and take up your cross and go after Jesus.