

**Core Seminar**

**Discipling**

**Class 2: Why Disciple?**

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# Introduction

Why would you want to disciple someone? Because you *have to*, i.e. you feel it is an obligation? Because you *want to*, i.e. because you have found some form of motivation that makes you want to do it?

Last week, we said that every Christian is called to a ministry of discipleship, whether it is you being discipled by a more mature believer, or you discipling someone younger in the faith, or both. Before we begin this ministry of discipleship, we want to understand the biblical underpinnings for a Christian’s motivation to make disciples. Today we are going to consider two reasons why you should disciple.

# Reason #1: Why Disciple? For your Joy!

It may strike some folks as odd to say that a primary motive for our discipling of others is the joy that we receive from disicpling. Sounds selfish, doesn’t it? But while there may be many ways that we could potentially pursue this joy *wrongly*, the fact remains that Scripture presents *our joy* as a legitimate motivator for Christians disciplers.

Listen to these verses (select folks to read them out lout beforehand):

“3I thank my God every time I remember you. 4In all my prayers for all of you, I always *pray with joy* 5because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3-5).

“ 1If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then *make my joy complete* by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2).

“1Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, *my joy and crown*, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!” (Philippians 4:1).

“19Everyone has heard about your obedience, *so I am full of joy over you*; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.” (Romans 16:19).

“4I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles *my joy knows no bounds*…. 13By all this we are encouraged.  In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. 14*I had boasted to him about you*, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. 15And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. 16*I am glad I can have complete confidence in you*” (2 Corinthians 7:4, 13-16).

“19For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?20Indeed, you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess 2:19-20).

“4It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us” (2 John 1:4).

Question – In all these verses, what was Paul and John’s basis for rejoicing? Can you pick up any common themes in these verses that explain their motivation for discipling?

Response – They wrote about their own joy. God intends to produce joy in you when you are used to help others prosper and grow.

Explanation – From these texts we see that Paul and John are taking special encouragement from the knowledge that THEY were personally used by God to help build up the Christians to whom they wrote. Does this at all surprise you? This is a *biblical* reason that we should not be ashamed to cultivate. Christians can very naturally find great pleasure in seeing other believers grow and prosper. Paul would often refer to his hearers as his “children in the Lord” and he seemed to take appropriate pleasure in seeing them prosper through the fruit of his ministry and the ongoing work of others. Paul’s joy is that his children are walking in the truth.

Question – So is this sort of joy selfish? Does a joy in personally helping to mature disciples lead us to be man-centered or is this a good thing?

Response – If this was the sum total of what Paul and John (and others) took pleasure in then *yes* it could lead to a wrong dependence. But that’s not the picture that we get. They were delighting to see themselves as the means used in Christian discipleship specifically because it then brought glory to the God they supremely loved.

Question – Does it lead to pride?

Response – The fact that you can do something badly is not an argument against doing it well.

Summation:

1. Christians rejoice in seeing other believers grow, and they take special joy in seeing that growth occur as a result of their involvement. This pleasure of laboring to see other people prosper spiritually through your involvement in their lives is one of the most foundational joys in the heart of a true Christian disciple.
2. Watching believers grow as a fruit of your ministry is a part of your glory and reward before Christ. Far from being wrong-headed, I would even say that if you do not take real pleasure in being used by God to encourage and build up other believers, then there is something amiss with your understanding.
3. Our pleasure in seeing God use us to encourage and build up other believers is an important and biblical motivation, but it is not the ultimate motivation.

**Reason #2: Why Disciple? For God’s glory!**

We learn from God’s word that the result of discipling is greater fruit from our lives that leads to God’s glory. To consider this idea carefully, we are going to spend the next few minutes looking at a section of Scripture that explains this concept in wonderful detail—John chapter 15, verses 1 through 17.

Read John 15:1-8. Here Jesus teaches his followers saying:

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown in the fire and burned. 7 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.*

In the next few weeks we will have time to think more about what it means to remain in Christ as an avenue to fruitfulness. But right now I want us to look more at the final idea in this section.

Question – What is it that Christ describes in the life of the believer that will bring glory to the Father?

Response – Our bearing much fruit. We will discuss what that fruit *is* in a moment.

Question – And what will that fruitfulness demonstrate to a watching world?

Response – That we are true disciples of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Question – So then, what is this fruit that Jesus is speaking about?

Response – The text is not specific about what this means precisely, or if it is even meant to be only one thing, or perhaps many things are intended here. However, we can get some pretty good insights into what meaning is intended by simply continuing to read verses 9 through 17. Here we see examples of the kind of fruit that Jesus has in mind, the fruit that should naturally flow from our being “in Christ” and how that fruit brings great glory to the Father.

Read verses 9-17.

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Clearly John chapter 15 is focused on the need to abide in Christ and on the love he has shown for us. But there is also a plain command for us in this passage too…we are told that we should love each other as Christ has loved us. So, it seems obvious that at least part of the fruit that is implied here is Love, i.e. a love for God that shows itself in love for each other. But let’s think about how Christ has loved us and how that may give us clues to the particular kind of “fruitful love” that we are called to display.

**Jesus Laid Down His Life For Us**

First, in verses 12-13 we read that Christ loved us by laying down his life for us. He commands us (followers of Christ) to do likewise—love for us is defined by us imitating Christ, i.e., loving fellow believers by laying down our life on their behalf.

Last week we said that we cannot lay down our lives for another with the saving effect that Christ alone could accomplish. Christ is the only begotten Son of God and his death accomplished a great atoning work that we can only marvel at, but never even mimic. Still it does seem that Christ would have us expend our lives for others in something of the same way that he did as well. So let’s think more specifically about what laying down our life could look like.

Question: With regard to doing good for humanity, what was the primary object of Jesus laying down his life for us? What was he accomplishing for those he had chosen by laying down His life?

Responses – To bring us to Father.

* + So that the we may share in the joy that Christ enjoys with the Father
  + So that we can bear fruit
  + So that our joy will be complete
  + So that our enmity toward God would be replaced by a loving relationship.

So it should be with us! We should lay down our lives for others with the deliberate intent of making ourselves a means that God may use to do these good things in the lives of others. Most of us will never be called on to die for other Christians. Only a select few are called to pour out their lives as a drink offering on the altar of martyrdom. But the rest of us are also called to pour out their lives as well, one drop at a time. Day by day, pouring out our time, our energy to do real, eternal good for the believers that Jesus has placed around us. Jesus lay down his life to do eternal good for those he loved, we should pour out our lives for others, not simply to help them in some earthly sense, but to try to help them *eternally*. Our fruit should be fruit that will last forever.

**Jesus Made Known to Us All That He had Learned From His Father**

Second, we read that another mark of Christ’s love for His disciples is that he made known to them what he learned from the Father. He opened up the truth and purposes of God to them. He shared with them the knowledge that came from the Father.

It is tragic that in our arrogant and individualistic culture many have lost the Biblical understanding that teaching is not essentially autocratic or rude. Far from being arrogant, to lovingly teach another person about truths from Scripture is a supreme sign that you really love them and consider them your friend. We, who have learned some things from God, should love others by sharing the truth of the Word with them as Christ has done so graciously for us.

So a second way we imitated Christ and show love for our brethren is by willingly sharing with others the truth you have learned from God’s Word.

This does not mean you need to be an expert in the Bible, like a seminary professor. Every Christian in this room has been given God’s truth, whether it is from your own personal study of the Word, or from the good public teaching with get in this church, or from good spiritual conversations you have with friends, or from the great reading we get to do through the many books sold or passed around in this church. You have a responsibility to show love to others by not hoarding that truth. You are called on to be a conduit of truth—to pass along to others what you have been taught by God.

Summation:

If you set out to deliberately relate to another Christian, with the intent of doing them good spiritually, you are loving them by laying down your life for them and by willingly passing on to them truths from God’s Word.

CONCLUSION:

1. To be fruitful in discipling we should focus on the fundamental motivation for discipling—our joy in God’s glory.
2. Desiring to see others grow is normative for Christians.

THINGS TO DO:

* 1. Meditate on the way discipling brings you joy, builds up the church, and brings God great glory.
  2. If you find that you are still not motivated to spend time encouraging other believers to grow then take some time this week to contemplate, turn over, “soak in” the reasons for discipling that we have set out in today’s lesson. As you consider biblical reasons, we hope you will find that the Word begins to motivate you heart.
  3. Determine *today* to cultivate a taste for the joy of being a means God uses to encourage others.