

FM MAT.28:16-20
CHURCH FIELD MANUAL 1.0

DISCIPLESHIP
MANUAL

DISCIPLESHIP DEPARTMENT OF THE CHURCH
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Introduction:

This manual is made up of different lessons that are designed to be brief and be read in one sitting. Each chapter is designed to be similar to a short article or blog post that is easily digestible. Discipleship is not only about learning biblical truths and theology; rather, it is a combination of learning biblical truths, applying those truths in your life, and being obedient to God's Word (James 1:22; John 14:15). Therefore, this manual provides questions at the end of each chapter to digest the lessons and a list of ways we can begin to be obedient to God's Word. This manual can be used in basic discipleship with a friend or even in a small group setting. If you have children, you could work through the material and simplify it for your kids.

"We need to hear the Gospel every day, because we forget it every day."
-Martin Luther

"The Gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue, but of life. It cannot be grasped by reason and memory only, but it is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart."
-John Calvin

Chapter 1. First Things: The Gospel Foundation

What is the Gospel? Briefly write down the Gospel from memory:

Now, write down the Gospel, but this time, it is an open book (open Bible) exam. You can utilize the Bible to help you:

The Gospel

The Gospel can be explained in different ways. It can be expressed in a legal manner where man is deserving of pending eternal punishment for sin and is forgiven through Christ's work on the cross. It can also be explained relationally, where we are at odds with a holy God due to our sin, and Jesus reconciles us into a right relationship with God through his work on the cross.¹ To truly understand the Gospel, we must understand who God is, who we are, who Christ is, and the appropriate response.²

God. Man. Christ. Response.

God:

God created all things, and he originally created them all good (Gen. 1-2). God is perfectly holy, all-powerful, self-sufficient, knows all things, and is worthy of all worship (Isa. 6:3; Mat. 19:26; Acts 17:25; 1 John 3:20; Psa. 29:2). There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. God is holy, just, and will punish all sin (Rom. 2:5-8).

Man:

Men and women were a special creation of God, made in his own image. God created them male and female. God created Adam and Eve in the Garden, and they were originally innocent of sin. Adam and Eve sinned against God by directly disobeying God's command (Gen. 3). This sin corrupted all mankind (Rom. 5:12-14). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3). Man, in his natural state, is not morally neutral but sinful (Rom. 3:23). All people have sinned (Rom. 3:23).

Christ:

Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life. Jesus died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22). Jesus' death on the cross also made it possible for man to be reconciled into a right relationship with God (Rom. 5:10).

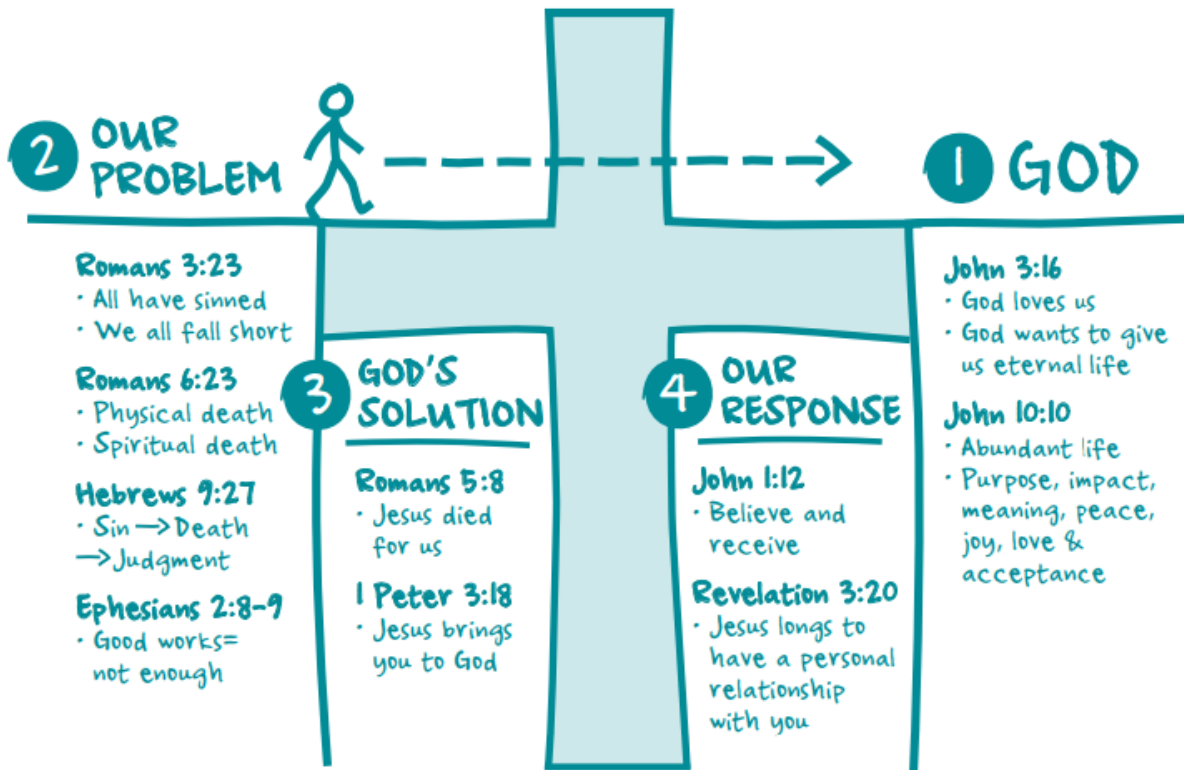
Response:

There is nothing man can do on his own to save himself from God's wrath and the eternal punishment that he deserves (Eph. 2:8-9). God calls everyone everywhere to admit that they are a sinner, repent of their sins, and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10). God also calls us to commit to following Christ in obedience and live life as a disciple of Jesus (1 John 2:1-6).

¹ The Bible also uses: adoption, heirs, redemption, exodus, the Passover...etc. All of these lenses help us understand the depth of the Gospel and marvel at the grace God has bestowed on us through Christ.

² See: Diagram 1 on page 5.

Diagram 1:



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Questions to Engage:

Who is God, and what are his attributes?

³ Adapted from the Navigators Discipleship Tool. Accessed 9/29/22 at <https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/navigators-bridge-to-life.pdf>

What does it mean for God to be holy?

What is sin?

Is man good in his natural state? What is man's problem in his natural state?

What was God's solution to man's problem?

What should man's response be?

Can a man do anything to save himself?

You are on an elevator, and you only have a couple of minutes before you have to exit. In a few sentences, how would you share the Gospel with someone on that elevator? What would you say?

Action Points:

- Talk about this with a mature believer in your life.
- Share the Gospel with a mature believer in your life and see if you can explain the Gospel.
- Share the Gospel with your children, your spouse, and your family. Ask if they understood it.
- Share the Gospel with an unbeliever.
- See if you can use the Cross-bridge diagram to explain the Gospel.

“When asked about his accomplishments as a reformer, Martin Luther said, “I simply taught, preached, wrote God’s Word: otherwise, I did nothing...The Word did it all.”
Martin Luther, Sermons I; vol. 51 of Luther’s Works, 77.

“Scripture is like a pair of spectacles which dispels the darkness and gives us a clear view of God.”
-John Calvin

Chapter 2. First Things: Theology of God's Word

Inspiration

The inspiration of Scripture can be defined as the supernatural influence the Holy Spirit had on the writers of Scripture that made their writings accurate and resulted in what they wrote being the Word of God.⁴ Peter provides evidence that New Testament authors believed that the Scriptures were inspired by God. Peter states, "Knowing this first of all that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).⁵ Peter explains that the Scriptures were not produced by man's will; rather, the writers were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul uses similar terminology when he states that all Scripture is "God-breathed" or "inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16).⁶

Inerrancy

Inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible is fully truthful in all its teachings.⁷ The word inerrancy is not found or defined in the Bible. However, the writers of Scripture imply the full truthfulness of the Bible. In 2 Samuel 7:28, one learns that God's words are true. The Bible also clearly teaches that God cannot lie and always tells the truth (Titus 1:2, Heb. 6:18). Jesus also makes the argument that God's Word is the standard of truth and that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). John states, "God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:20). If God knows all, then he cannot be uninformed or err in any matter. Not only does God know everything, but he is everywhere, or omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24). Scripture also informs the reader that God has unlimited power and can do anything. In other words, He is omnipotent. If the Bible is inspired by God: God cannot lie, God is all-knowing, and God is omnipresent and all-powerful, then God's Word is trustworthy and inerrant.⁸

God's Word is Sufficient

2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Paul believed that the Scriptures were sufficient for ministry because they had God as their author. We are told that when God's Word goes out, it will not return to him "empty, but it shall "accomplish" all that he purposes (Isa. 55:10-11). God's Word is like "fire" and "like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:2). God's Word is "living and active" and discerns the "thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). God's Word has real power and authority in our lives. Since the Bible is the Word of God and is inerrant, then it is the authority in the lives of believers and the church. Since the Bible is the Word of God, one should examine their life according to God's revealed will. The believer should not conform to this world (Rom. 12:2), but should endeavor to follow Christ's example (1 Cor. 11:1) of submission to God's will (Luke 22:42, Mat. 6:10).

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 169.

⁵ "Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Crossway, Wheaton, IL: 2016)."

⁶ See also: Luke 5:1; 1 Cor. 14:3; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; 1Thes. 2:13

⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 188.

⁸ See also: Ps. 12:6, 18:30, 19:7-11, 119:160; Prov. 30:5; John 17:17; Titus 1:2

Questions to Engage:

What are some of the theological truths you learned about the Bible?

If the Bible is God's Word, what does that mean about its authority in our lives?

If the Bible is God's Word, what does that mean about its authority in how we do church?

When culture and the Bible conflict, which one do we follow and why?

If you have a difficult decision to make, do you pray and search the scriptures? If so, why and how? If not, why?

Action Points:

- Begin to daily read God's Word.
- Find a Bible reading plan.
 - Journaling Bibles are helpful for people who like to process what they are learning and take notes.
 - The *ESV Study Bible*⁹ is a great resource if you want to know the historical and cultural background surrounding a passage. Study Bibles can also be helpful if there is confusion when reading difficult passages.
- Begin to apply the Bible in your life and decision-making.
- When faced with a moral dilemma, the normal question is what is the policy, rule, or law concerning this situation? As Christians, we should also respond to dilemmas with prayer and searching the Scriptures for guidance. The Bible does not cover every dilemma or situation, but there are plenty of general concepts you can use to help you make a decision or discern what your response should be.

⁹ See: Appendix 2: Recommended Reading.

“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

“Only a disciple can make a disciple.”

-A. W. Tozer

Chapter 3. What is discipleship?

Jesus gave his disciples and all believers a command in Matthew 28:18-20:

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

The heart of that command centers around making disciples and teaching them God’s Word. Believers make disciples by sharing the Gospel with non-believers who then come to faith, and then the believers lovingly teach them to obey and apply God’s Word in their lives. The goal of discipleship is to be Christ-like and to disciple others to be Christ-like. The Apostle Paul told the church in Corinth:

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”¹⁰

This is our mark. This is our goal. To be Christ-like in thought, word, and deed. In other words, we should seek to obey the teachings of Jesus and Scripture. Discipleship is the pattern we see throughout the Scriptures. God even instituted a discipleship element of children in the Passover meal. In Exodus chapter 12, Moses explains the Passover, and there is a provision for when Hebrew children ask, “What do you mean by this service?”¹¹ Parents were then instructed to teach their children about how God redeemed and rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus called twelve men to follow him and he disciplined them throughout his public ministry. Jesus lived life with those disciples, answered their questions, lovingly corrected them, broke bread with them, and sent them out to share the good news of the Gospel. Timothy was disciplined by his godly mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice are great examples of the crucial work of discipling our children. Later in Timothy’s life, Paul began to disciple Timothy (2 Tim. 3:14). All of Paul’s letters in the New Testament are examples of how Paul disciplined individuals and entire churches. Discipleship is a mark of a healthy church and a healthy Christian, and it is a God-given mission to believers.

Practically in the local church, discipleship happens at the congregational level (big group) through biblically-driven and Gospel-centered sermons. That discipleship is further carried out in the small-group setting through living life together, encouraging one another, learning together, and applying God’s Word actively in our lives. That discipleship must extend its roots also into the family. Every parent should be involved in discipling their children and should train their child in the “way they should go” (Prov. 22:6).¹²

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 11:1. This would be a great verse to memorize and apply to your life.

¹¹ Exodus 12:25-27

¹² See: Appendix: Family Discipleship; for more information.

Discipleship is not just the transfer of knowledge (theology, apologetics, church history). Discipleship must be reflected in a person's character, actions, and life. Discipleship culminates in a life of obedience to God and his Word. Discipleship should also lead a person to share the Gospel with someone and ultimately disciple someone themselves.

Questions to Engage:

Why should believers be involved in discipleship?

What are some biblical examples of discipleship?

What is the goal of discipleship?

If you are a parent, what are some practical ways you can disciple your children?

What should discipleship culminate into?

Action Points:

- If you are not a member of a local church, seek to find a Gospel-centered and Bible-believing church where the pastor preaches expositional sermons from the Bible (preaching that is usually verse by verse, where the point of the sermon is the point found in the Scripture).
- Find a mature believer to disciple you and talk through living a Christian life. Talk to a pastor at a solid church, and ask if there is someone they could pair you with to disciple you.
- Create a spiritual growth plan that includes: joining a church, regularly being in fellowship with other believers, praying, and reading God's word.
- Find a Bible reading plan to follow.
- Find a small group or Bible study to join.
- If you have children, develop a discipling plan for your children.
- Complete this discipleship manual.

“In order to discover the character of people, we have only to observe what they love.”
-Saint Augustine of Hippo

“Ah, Lord Jesus! I never knew Your love till I understood the meaning of Your death.”
-Charles Spurgeon

Chapter 4. Gospel Living: Love

Love the Lord

One of the distinguishing marks of a mature believer is love. The Lord taught Israel through Moses that “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”¹³ The Lord is our creator (Rom. 1:25). The Lord is loving (1 John 4:8), gracious, merciful, and perfect. The Lord redeemed us, rescued us, and adopted us. The Lord is all-powerful, self-sufficient, and there is nothing greater than God (Acts 17:24-25; Heb. 6:13). Yet, the Lord chooses to enter into a relationship with us through his Son, Jesus’s work on the cross. Loving the Lord is the only right response to such an awesome and gracious God.

Love your neighbor

Not only are we called to love the Lord, but we are called to love our neighbor. In Luke 10:25-37, a lawyer came to Jesus asking him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to “love the Lord” and love “your neighbor” (Luke 10:27). The lawyer, in an attempt to justify himself, asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”¹⁴ Jesus then taught him the parable of the good Samaritan, in which the culturally despised Samaritan is the hero of the story and is the true neighbor in the story. The good Samaritan acted out of love (and mercy) and took care of an injured man when the Jewish religious elites refused to do so. Jesus ended the parable with a command, “You go, and do likewise.”¹⁵ John (one of Jesus’s disciples) carries this theme on by explaining that if anyone sees his brother in need and refuses to help him, then “God’s love” does not “abide in him.”¹⁶ This is not just a theoretical love, but a love that results in action, service, and sacrifice.

We should love others because God first loved us (John 13:34; 1 John 4:19). When we love others, it is a practical way we live out the Gospel in our own lives. Jesus also explained that by loving your neighbor and fellow Christian, others would know that you are a disciple of Jesus (John 13:35). Likewise, it is also a true act of love to share the Gospel with unbelievers. It is loving because you are participating in God’s mission to save the lost from eternal punishment and wrath. It is loving because you are involved in God’s mission to reconcile others into a right relationship with the Lord that leads to eternal life and joy.

Love Your Enemies

Jesus also asks us to practice love in a way that is counter-cultural and counter to our first inclination. Jesus calls us to something radical. Jesus taught us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”¹⁷ It is easy to love those who love you (Mat. 5:46), but Jesus calls us to love those who are not easy to love and might not even want our love. Jesus perfectly modeled this type of love by loving us even though in our natural state we are hostile to God (Rom.8:7) and enemies of God (Rom. 5:10).

¹³ Deut. 6:5

¹⁴ Luke 10:29

¹⁵ Luke 10:37

¹⁶ 1 John 3:17; cf. 1 John 4:20

¹⁷ Mat. 5:44

Read: John 13:34-35. What does this teach you about God's relationship with you? What is the basis of Jesus' command? What is Jesus' command? What is the result if you rightly fulfill that command?

Who are some people in your life who are hard to love, but you know that you are called to love?

What are some barriers to loving the people in your life?

Does your life reflect these commands to love the Lord, your neighbor, and those that are hard to love? If not, why? How can you show others you love them?

Read: Deuteronomy 6:5. What would this look like in your life?

Where in your life were you hurt by someone you loved or hurt by the lack of love? What do you need to work through in yourself or with another to be able to better love both the Lord and others?

Action Points:

- Search your heart this week.
 - Ask yourself, "Am I loving others well?"
 - Am I only loving those who are easy to love?
 - Is there partiality in my love?
 - Do I love the Lord as Deuteronomy 6:5 calls me to?
- Memorize Deuteronomy 6:5.
- Take some concrete actions to show your family, friends, and neighbors that you love them.

“Pride or self-glorification is the cause and starting point of all controversies, when each person, claiming for himself more than he is entitled to have, is eager to have others in his power.”

-John Calvin, The First Epistle of Paul Apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4:6, p.90

“For the Christian, humility is absolutely indispensable. Without it, there can be no self-knowledge, no repentance, no faith, and no salvation.”

-A.W. Tozer

Chapter 5. Gospel Living: Humility

Earlier, it was argued that the goal of discipleship is to be more Christ-like.¹⁸ When Jesus dwelt among men and “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), he gave up more than we can fathom. Jesus was born to a common family, where his earthly father was a blue-collar worker (Mark 6:3). He was born in a little town called Bethlehem (Mat. 2:1) and not in a hospital, but what probably amounted to a stable. The baby Jesus was not placed in a crib or bed, but in a manger (feeding trough; Luke 2:7). Jesus’s hometown, of sorts, was Nazareth which had a seedy reputation. One of the disciples even asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”¹⁹

Later in Jesus’s ministry, he took off his culturally acceptable clothes, tied a towel around his waist, and began washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-20). When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, he took on the form of a servant and performed a task that Jewish people deemed only fitting for servants. Jesus used the example of washing his disciples’ feet to teach humility and servant leadership, and his actions ultimately foreshadowed the work he would do on the cross. Paul taught the Philippians about humility and unity when he stated, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4). Paul rooted his teaching in humility by holding up Jesus’s example of humility on the cross. Paul explains:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”²⁰

The argument used by Paul is that since Christ was humble, then we should be humble. If Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, can exemplify humility, then we also can consider others before ourselves. When we live out humility, we are living out elements of the Gospel. Humility then is a true mark of Christian maturity and comes from a deep understanding of the Gospel. When we come to faith, we are admitting that we are not worthy and we are not righteous (we are sinners). Placing our faith in Christ involves the admission that because of our sin, we have been storing up a lifetime of wrath and rightly deserve eternal punishment (Rom. 1:18, 2:5) that we cannot work off on our own. Faith in Christ requires us to humble ourselves and trust in Jesus’s sacrificial work on the cross for forgiveness and eternal security.

So why should humility be reflected in a believer's life? Humility is required to accept the good news of the Gospel and Christ’s work on our behalf. We should also be humble because Jesus perfectly displayed humility in his life, and we are called to be Christ-like.

¹⁸ See: Chapter 3. What is discipleship?

¹⁹ John 1:46

²⁰ Philippians 2:5-8

Questions to Engage:

Read: Philippians 2:1-11. What is humility?

According to Phil. 2:1-11, how did Jesus perfectly model humility?

According to Phil. 2:1-11, what would be the result if members of the church were more humble?

How have you seen humility modeled by people in your life? Are you modeling humility?

What are some ways you can reflect the Gospel through being humble in your everyday life?

Action Points:

- Reflect on the following:
 - Would others say I am humble?
 - In what ways this week have I not demonstrated humility?
 - In what ways can I better display humility?
 - What are some barriers to my humility?
 - How can I destroy pride in my life?
- Look for ways to serve others this week.
- Examine your actions this week and demonstrate humility.

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”

-C.S. Lewis

“The Prince whom I serve and honor, is merciful and ready to forgive...”

-John Bunyan

Chapter 6. Gospel Living: Forgiveness

Toward the end of King David's rule over Israel, his son Absalom conspired to overthrow him as king (2 Sam. 15). Absalom sowed discord and manipulated the Israelites into following him instead of King David. Eventually, David had to flee Jerusalem.²¹ While fleeing, a man named Shimei came out and cursed David and threw stones at him.²² One of David's men became angry at Shimei for disgracing the King and asked David if he could go and "take off his head."²³ David waved off his man. Later, when David mustered men to retake his kingdom, surprisingly, he told his men to "deal gently" with Absalom, the usurper.²⁴ David eventually regained his throne and shockingly forgave (pardoned) his enemies.²⁵ David, in his life, was an imperfect man, but in his forgiveness, he prefigured the forgiveness Christ would bring.

Forgiveness for a believer is an integral part of our worldview. For the Christian, the foundation of relational forgiveness first begins with our personal need for forgiveness from the Lord. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We all deserve eternal punishment. But God, being rich in love and mercy, sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. If you repent of your sins and place your faith in Jesus, then you will be forgiven of your sins. You will no longer be alienated from a holy God, but will be reconciled in your relationship with the Lord. The good news of the Gospel is that you have been forgiven!

Therefore, since we have been forgiven by God through Jesus, we can have relational forgiveness with others. Because God has forgiven us, we can, and we should, forgive others. Paul says in Colossians 3:13, "If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." In this way, forgiveness is like love. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). In the same way, we can forgive others relationally because God has forgiven us through Christ's work on the cross. When we forgive others and encourage others to forgive, we are pointing people back to the Gospel. For that reason, our disposition toward forgiveness is directly tied to our humility and our understanding of the Gospel. Our attitude toward forgiveness is then linked to our realization that we also need forgiveness.

We should also forgive others because Jesus taught us to forgive and modeled it for us in his ministry. In the Lord's prayer, when Jesus taught his disciples and us how to pray, he said, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."²⁶ Peter in Matthew 18:21-22, asked Jesus, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Mat. 18:22).

²¹ 2 Sam. 15:14

²² 2 Sam. 16:5-6

²³ 2 Sam. 16:9

²⁴ 2 Sam. 18:5

²⁵ 2 Sam. 19:16-43

²⁶ Mat. 6:12; cf. Luke 11:4

Jesus perfectly modeled forgiveness for us. Jesus, who was perfect and holy, without fault, was wrongly arrested by Jewish leaders and tried in a sham trial. They even brought false witnesses against Jesus in court, he was beaten, he was tortured, and he was murdered like a criminal on a cross. Yet, he perfectly modeled forgiveness, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."²⁷

So, why should we forgive others? Because we have been forgiven, we should forgive others. Jesus taught us to forgive others, and Jesus modeled forgiveness in his life. Therefore, we should go and forgive. We should also encourage others to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Our hope and prayer should be for our church to be filled with people with a disposition toward forgiveness.

Questions to Engage:

What is the foundation for forgiveness?

Why should we forgive others?

How does forgiveness in our relationships point back to the Gospel?

²⁷ Luke 23:34

How is forgiveness tied to humility?

Do you only have to forgive those who ask for forgiveness? Support your answer biblically.

Action Points:

- Search your heart. Ask the Lord for wisdom and discernment.
 - Is there anyone you have wronged and need to ask to give you forgiveness?
 - Is there anyone that you need to forgive?
- Model forgiveness in your daily life: at work, in your family, with your spouse, and with your kids.
- Learn to say, "I am sorry."
- Learn to ask for forgiveness.
- Encourage others to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.
- For further fortification, read Paul's letter to Philemon (it is found just before Hebrews) and meditate on how Paul appealed to his friend Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

“Here, then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.”

-R.C. Sproul

“A Bible that’s falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t.”

-Charles Spurgeon

Chapter 7. Spiritual Disciplines: Scripture

God's Word is "living, and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). God's Word is powerful; God's Word is like "fire" and is like a "hammer that breaks the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29). God's Word is sufficient for the work of the ministry because it has God as its author (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In order to be shaped and formed by God's Word, we must read, study, meditate on, and memorize God's Word.

Reading God's Word

Since God's Word is his revealed will for our lives, we should read the Bible. A healthy Christian life consists of a steady diet of God's Word. In other words, if you want to have a healthy Christ-centered life, you must feast upon God's Word daily. Just like working out in a gym, you need a plan and a strategy. Pick a Bible reading plan that has you reading through both the Old Testament and New Testament. Pick a consistent time and location to read your Bible. This will aid you in becoming more disciplined and begin forming a habit. Read your Bible in the morning. If you try to read your Bible right before bed, you will become tired and sleepy. Additionally, you want to pray and read your Bible before the day's battles have begun, not after they are over.

We all were created by God with different minds, personalities, and learning styles. For some, reading and writing comes naturally. Others are auditory learners and might benefit from listening to the Bible read to them. There are several apps that can be downloaded on your phone that you can use to listen to the Bible in different versions and hear it read by different readers. Listening to the Bible is great on road trips, commuting, while going for a walk, or doing house chores.

Studying God's Word

A quick reading of Paul's letters and it becomes obvious that he clearly studied the Scriptures. When writing to young Timothy, Paul even instructed him to bring him his "books and above all the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). It is safe to assume that in that collection was a portion of the Scriptures, and it reveals Paul's desire to study them. Studying God's Word is simply shifting from a surface level reading to diving deeper into a text. Begin by making observations of the text, note the context of the verse within a paragraph and that verse within the entire book (eventually working to see how it fits in the overall redemptive history of the Bible). Ask questions of the text: What does that mean? Who is that directed to? What does that teach me about God? What does this teach me about man? What does this teach me about how I am supposed to interact with others? Look up words you do not know. If your Bible has cross references, look up the Scriptures that are referenced for insight. Begin looking for themes and theological points an author is trying to make. Just like studying in school, outline a book, summarize paragraphs in your own words, and track the flow of an author's thoughts.

Meditation and Marinating on God's Word

The Lord told Joshua that his law should always be on his mouth and that he should "meditate on it day and night" (Jos. 1:8). When Paul was giving young Timothy some locker

room coaching for his ministry, he said, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim. 2:7). So, too, we must think over God’s word.

Charles Spurgeon, a famous Christian Pastor and thinker from the 1800’s, said, “One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold-smith and can hammer that promise out for weeks.”²⁸ The more one focuses, reflects on, and ponders the Word, the more it begins to unfold through the Holy Spirit’s work. The more you meditate on the Word throughout the day, you can begin to see how it applies in multiple areas of life. The more the Word is rolled around in your mind, the more it begins to identify sin that needs to be rooted out and confessed to the Lord. Similar to applying herbs and spices to a choice cut of meat, the longer the seasoning is allowed to work, the deeper the spices permeate the meat, and the more flavorful the result.

Memorization

Imagine you are going to battle and you only have the weapons on your person. I hope you are prepared. Likewise, every day we are faced with temptations, trials, and challenging situations, and most of the time we do not have the time to pull out our thick study Bible for reference. We show up to the fight only with as much Bible as we have memorized and stored away in our hearts. Paul instructs us to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). The Psalmist says, “I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word” (Psa. 119:16). This means we need to get to the hard work of memorizing Scripture. Committing verses to memory makes handling temptations, facing trials, and counseling friends easier. Memorizing Scripture also forces you into meditating on God’s precious Word and then applying it in the fast-paced mess that is life.

²⁸ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning & Evening*, Feb. 20 Morning.

Questions to Engage:

Why should I read God's Word?

Why should I study and meditate on God's Word?

Why should I memorize the Bible?

How can I improve my daily intake of God's Word?

What time of day should I read the Bible?

Where should I read my Bible?

Action Points:

- Choose a Bible reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in 1-2 years.
- Choose a time and place to read your Bible daily to begin to become more disciplined in reading God's Word.
- Begin meditating on your morning Scripture readings throughout the day. Ask yourself how that passage or verse applies in your life throughout the day.
- Ask friends what God is teaching them in their Bible reading. This will encourage them and challenge you to keep reading your Bible.
- Make a list of verses you think you should memorize that would help in training you toward godliness, guarding you in temptation, or encouraging a friend.

“The central problem of our age is not liberalism or modernism...All these are dangerous but not the primary threat. The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord’s work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit.”

-Francis A. Schaeffer, *No Little People*, 66.

“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”

-Corrie Ten Boom

Chapter 8. Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

Prayer is simply communication with God. However, because of our sin, we need a mediator between us and a Holy God (Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21-22). Believers can pray with faith and assurance that God will hear them because we have Jesus as a perfect mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:6). Prayer does not inform God of our needs since he is omniscient (all-knowing) and already knows what we need before asking him (Matt. 6:8). However, we are still encouraged to pray, and Jesus assumes that we will pray (Mat. 6:5). Prayer is not a means for us to apply leverage to God for him to do our will (Mat. 6:10, 26:42). A good friend once reaffirmed this by saying, "God is not a genie in the Bible."

Believers are told that we must pray "without ceasing," and that prayer should be the constant rhythm of our lives (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thes. 5:17). Believers should also pray with faith as though they will receive the fulfillment of the request (Mark 11:24; Heb. 11:1, 6). Therefore, consistent prayer creates "in ourselves a right attitude with respect to God's will."²⁹ In other words, prayer aligns the believer with fulfilling God's will and not our own. The Lord might not answer every one of our prayers according to our desires. However, the Lord will bless us with what is best for us and, ultimately, what is in accordance with His will (Rom. 8:27-28).

Scripture teaches us that believers should pray for "one another" because the prayer of "a righteous person has great power" (James 5:16). The Apostle Paul asked for prayer multiple times from churches. If the Apostle Paul needed prayer (and had the humility to ask for it), then modern believers certainly need to ask for prayer from other believers (1 Thes. 5:25; 2 Thes. 3:1). We are told to pray for our enemies who persecute us (Mat. 5:44). Believers are also called to pray for "all people, for kings and all who are in high positions" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). Jesus set us an example to follow by praying often and teaching believers how to pray through the Lord's Prayer (Mat. 6:9-15). Prayer then is the "principal exercise of faith."³⁰ After all, it takes little faith and commitment to pray once or twice about something, but consistent prayer is a product of faith and commitment. Prayer is one of the means God has prescribed for fulfilling His will in this world.

An example of prayer in Jesus's life is found in Mark's Gospel. The Gospel of Mark begins in a flurry. In Mark chapter one, John the Baptist shows up, Jesus is baptized, Jesus is tempted in the desert, and then Jesus begins his public ministry. Jesus calls fishermen to become his disciples, Jesus teaches crowds, casts out evil spirits, heals Peter's mother-in-law, and heals many (Mark 1:29-34). Even after a busy day, Jesus rose early in the morning while "it was still dark," went out into a desolate place, and "he prayed" (Mark 1:35). Jesus prayed before the battles of the day began and not after they were over. If Jesus made prayer a priority, then as his followers, we should make prayer a priority.

²⁹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Baker Academic, 1998), 379.

³⁰ Preface to the Hendrickson Edition, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, XVI.

Questions to Engage:

How is my prayer life?

When do you usually pray? How often do you pray?

Is your prayer balanced? Do you pray for yourself and others?

Do you thank the Lord during your prayers, or do you only present Him with problems?

What are some of your barriers to prayer?

Action Points:

- Set aside a time every day and location to pray. Creating a pattern helps create a habit and a discipline for prayer.
- Create a prayer list for the people you are praying for and the things you are praying about.
- Create a prayer list for unbelievers in your life and pray for them regularly that they would come to faith.
- Ask your friends how you can pray for them.
- When someone asks for prayer, pray for them right there on the spot. Add them to your prayer list and then follow up with them later about their prayer request (This shows them that you are praying for them and care for them).

“Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food.”

-Dallas Willard

“Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one’s flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity.”

-Saint Augustine

Chapter 9. Spiritual Disciplines: Fasting

Fasting is probably one of the most overlooked spiritual disciplines. Fasting is simply the “voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.”³¹ The most common Christian type of fast involves abstaining from food, but allows for drinking water since it is vital for the healthy function of the human body.³² Our modern culture is self-indulgent, gluttonous, and impatient. Fasting from anything in our modern culture is not the norm. Therefore, fasting might seem intimidating, scary, or even slightly extreme due to it being counter-cultural. However, the Bible is full of examples of fasting, and believers should not ignore them. Fasting is mentioned in the Bible about seventy-seven times. King David³³, Ezra³⁴, Nehemiah³⁵, Esther³⁶, and Daniel³⁷ are just a portion of the people who fasted in the Bible. Jesus even teaches about fasting in the sermon on the mount. Jesus said:

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt 6:16-18).

Jesus said, “When you fast,” and it informs us that he assumes his people will fast (Mat. 6:16). Jesus then gives specific instructions on how to fast. Apparently, some would draw attention to the fact that they were fasting by purposefully disfiguring their faces and not keeping up with personal hygiene. Jesus instructs us to fast in “secret,” and the Lord, who is all-knowing (omniscient), will reward us. The Bible also includes examples of partial fasts (Dan. 1:12), congregational fasts (Joel 2:15-16), and fasting from things other than food (1 Cor. 7:1-5).

With fasting, there must be a biblical purpose to the fast for it to be meaningful. Some use hunger to remind them to pray for a specific purpose. Donald Whitney explains that there are ten major categories for fasting in the Scriptures: to strengthen prayer, to seek God for guidance, to express grief, to seek deliverance or protection, to express repentance, to humble oneself before God, to express concern for the work of God, to minister to the needs of others, to overcome temptation or dedicate yourself to God, and to express love/worship of God.³⁸

³¹ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress, 2014), 192.

³² Please check with your doctor if you have any health issues that might preclude you from fasting. Always follow the advice of your physician. If you have a medical condition that precludes you from fasting, please don't. Even those unable to fast from food can still benefit from fasting in other ways (social media, smartphones, etc.).

³³ 2 Sam. 12:16-23; cf. Psalm 35:13; 69:10-11; 109:24

³⁴ Ezz. 8:21-23; cf. 9:1-6

³⁵ Neh. 1:4

³⁶ Est.4:1-17

³⁷ Dan. 9:1-3

³⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 198-217.

Questions to Engage:

Have you ever fasted? What are your thoughts on fasting? Do you have any fears about fasting?

What are other things besides food that are keeping you from the Lord or from following Jesus?

Why is fasting challenging? What are some barriers to fasting?

Do you have any experiences or wounds that might keep you from fasting?

Will you fast? What should you fast from?

Action Points:

- Talk with a mature believer about fasting. Share your concerns and fears. Ask them any additional questions you might have.
- Look up the biblical references listed in the above chapter and read them for context.
- Consider fasting for a specific spiritual purpose.

“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.”

-John Bunyan

“A lack of generosity refuses to acknowledge that your assets are not really yours, but God's.”

-Tim Keller

Chapter 10. Spiritual Disciplines: Generosity

Our disposition and our attitude toward generosity is directly tied to our understanding of the Gospel. God has been generous to us while we were sinners and undeserving of grace (Rom. 5:8). While we were sinners, God sent his only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16). God has made the ultimate and most generous gift to us by giving us his only Son who is perfect and holy.³⁹ God also created the whole world, the Earth, air, water, and every life-sustaining resource (John 1:3). Everything that we have, we owe to him as Creator.

Similarly, since we have been forgiven, we should forgive (Eph. 4:32). Because God loves us, we can love others (1 John 4:19). Likewise, we should be generous because God has been generous to us. The generosity shown to us by God was also on full display for us in Jesus's life and ministry. Jesus not only modeled generosity by giving his own life, but he also demonstrated it in his ministry. Jesus gave the disciples a lot of his time: Jesus traveled with them, he ate with them, he healed their families (Mark 1:30-31). He taught them, and he saved them from storms (Mat. 8:23-27). Jesus healed people and freed them from oppression by demons. Jesus also taught his disciples to be generous. One could say that Jesus showed generosity in his ministry, taught generosity⁴⁰ throughout his ministry, and gave the ultimate gift of generosity. John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Generosity can be shown in multiple ways. Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan teaches us several points about loving our neighbor and living generously (Luke 10:25-37). The Good Samaritan was generous by serving a dying man by binding up his wounds (Luke 10:34). The Good Samaritan put the man on his own animal which required him to walk all the way to the inn (Luke 10:34). The Samaritan was generous with his time since taking care of the dying man pulled him away from his journey (Luke 10:33). The Samaritan was also generous with his money by paying "two denarii" for his lodging and his care (Luke 10:35). That sum of money at that time was equal to two days' worth of labor.

Being generous is a mark of Christian maturity. Considering Jesus's generosity, it should also be a consistent attitude in the Christian life. Paul calls believers to be "cheerful givers" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Therefore, it is out of joy that the Christian also help financially support the local church, church plants, ministries, the poor, orphans, widows, those in need, and missions.⁴¹

³⁹ 2 Cor. 9:15, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"

⁴⁰ Luke 6:38, 12:33, 21:1-4; Mat. 10:42.

⁴¹ See: Luke 8:3; 1 Cor. 9:6-14; 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 3 John 1:7-8

Questions to Engage:

Why should Christians be generous?

How can I cultivate a generous heart and attitude?

What are some barriers to being generous?

Do I have any wounds, trauma, or fear that prevent me from being generous?

Do you support your local church financially? Why or why not?

Do you support your local church through serving? Why or why not?

What skills or resources has God given you that you need to be generous with?

In what ways have you seen people be generous that has been meaningful to you?

How do you feel God is calling you to be generous?

Action Points:

- Search your heart and ask yourself the following questions:
 - Am I being generous with my time?
 - Am I being generous with the resources God has given me?
 - Am I being generous financially?
 - Is money an idol for me that I need to tear down?
 - Is greed a sin I need to confess and repent of?

- Identify some ways you can cultivate a generous heart and attitude.
- Identify some ways that you could be more generous and act out of joy.
- Consider supporting your local church, church plants, ministries, and missions.
- Consider being generous with your time and skills that God has given you.
- Consider helping those around you (your neighbor) when a need arises: meals, a ride, watching kids, or getting their mail.

“When a person becomes a Christian, he doesn’t just join a local church because it’s a good habit for growing in spiritual maturity. He joins a local church because it’s the expression of what Christ has made him—a member of the body of Christ.”

-Mark Dever

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't.”

-John Piper

Chapter 11. The Church: What is the Church?

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus assumes that we will belong to a church. But what is a church? Jesus says, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Mat. 18:20). Does that mean when we bump into another Christian at the grocery store, we are at church?

In the beginning of the early church, the promised Holy Spirit descended on the disciples (Acts 2:1-6). Peter preached a convicting and heart-felt sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2). The people were “cut to the heart” and asked the disciples, “Brothers what should we do?” That early formation of believers became a church, and they were characterized by several things: 1) they were believers (Acts 2:38); 2) they were baptized (Acts 2:38); 3) they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42); 4) they committed to being in fellowship (Acts 2:42); 5) they participated in the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42; cf. 1 Cor. 10:16); 6) they devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42); 7) they had elders and deacons which were part of a church government (Act 14:23; Phil. 1:1-2); 8) the church exercised discipline (Mat. 18:15-20; cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

The reformers summarized the marks of a church in this way: the marks of a true church are the pure preaching of the gospel, pure administration of the sacraments, and church discipline.⁴² These distinguishing characteristics delineate a local church from a para-church organization (e.g., homeless ministry, pregnancy center, or food pantry). This also means that the church is not a building, but a congregation or gathering of people.

These marks tell us what the church is, but what is the church supposed to do? The local church exists by God, for God, and for God’s glory. So, the local church should worship God, edify believers, and evangelize the world.⁴³ All of these actions, in turn, glorify God.

Psalms 148-150 are filled with commands to “Praise the Lord.” When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the Devil asked him to worship him (Luke 4:7). Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” There is a clear biblical command to worship the Lord. Worship is also an eschatological reality.⁴⁴ In Revelation, John describes “myriads of myriads” of living creatures, elders, and angels worshiping the Lord (Rev. 5:9-14). So, the church should worship the Lord and glorify him.

Jesus is also head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Jesus also gifts and equips the church with pastors and teachers to build up the body for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). The

⁴² Cf. Belgic Confession, Article 29; John Calvin's, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, 4.1.7.

⁴³ Sometimes people will refer to the “universal church” when discussing the fact that the church is also universal and timeless, including all believers for all time (Acts 9:3; Eph. 1:22, 23, 5:25; Col. 1:18). The local church is a specific group of Christians committed to meeting together that are unified under one church government in a specific geographical area.

⁴⁴ Eschatological reality means that in the end of times or the last time, believers, “living creatures,” and angels will all worship the Lord (Rev. 5:9-14).

church is also gifted with people who have spiritual gifts that are meant to “build up” the church (1 Cor. 14:12, 26). Paul also thanks the Lord for the Thessalonian church and praises them for sharing the Gospel with the world (1 Thes. 1:8). God’s intent was that through the church, “the manifold wisdom of God should be made known” (Eph. 3:10). The church is also a “pillar and buttress of truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). One should also remember that the church was given the Great Commission to share the Gospel and make “disciples of all nations” (Mat. 28:18-20). So, the church should build up the body and reach the lost.

Questions to Engage:

Is a local church a building, program, or event?

What is the church supposed to do?

Why should you belong to a church?

Read: 1 Cor. 10:32, 11:16, 15:9. Whose church is it?

Read: Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23. Who is the leader of the church? If the church had an organizational chart or a chain of command, who would be at the top?

Read: Mat. 16:18-19; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:29. What do these verses tell us about the church?

Action Points:

- If you are not a member of a local church, find a Gospel-centered and Bible-believing church where the pastor preaches expositional sermons from the Bible (preaching that is usually verse by verse, where the point of the sermon is the point found in the Scripture).
- Value your church membership by: serving, making real relationships, participating in church life, cheerfully giving, and participating in voting (when applicable). Get to know church leadership and staff.

“The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.”

-Charles Spurgeon

Chapter 12. The Church: Fellowship

Community and fellowship preceded creation. If we were to turn back the clock to the moment right before God created the universe, there was fellowship.⁴⁵ God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit preexisted in perfect fellowship and community with one another before creation.⁴⁶ When man was created, a sense of fellowship was baked into the recipe since man was also created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1:27). Even when God created man, he said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). When Jesus became flesh and dwelt among man, he gathered a group of twelve disciples. When the first church formed on Pentecost, it says that they devoted themselves to “fellowship” (Acts 2:42).

Jesus even assumed that Christians would belong to a local church (Mat. 18:15-20). The author of Hebrews encourages us “stir up one another to love and good works” (Heb. 10:24); this only works if we are in fellowship. Then in the very next verse, the author of Hebrews tells us not to neglect fellowship (Heb. 10:25). The pattern for Christians in the New Testament was to belong to a local church and to be in genuine community with other believers. There are no examples of healthy “Lone Ranger” Christians in the biblical record.

Paul the Apostle even told the church in Rome that he desired to fellowship with them so that they might be both “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Rom. 1:11-12). Not only are we supposed to encourage one another in the faith, but Paul also calls us to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2). In Proverbs, the inspired author explains that “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17). This means that when we are in real relationships with other believers, we will be challenged, corrected, and fine-tuned. Community, and more specifically, the church is a God-given resource that he uses to build us up for his glory (Eph. 4:11-13).

Not belonging to a local church or being in fellowship in a local church is to ignore the crucial and active work of Christ. Jesus built the church (Mat. 16:18). Jesus organized the church (Eph. 4:11-16; cf. 1 Cor. 12:18). Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 4:15). Jesus sustains the church and grows the church (Eph. 4:15-16). Jesus purchased the church with his own blood (Acts. 20:28). The church is part of God’s plan for the spiritual development of the believer, and God has appointed leaders in the church to equip believers for ministry (Eph. 4:11-16). Church membership and fellowship is based on a discernable pattern found in the Bible. This biblical pattern encourages us to join a local church, make ourselves known, be held accountable, build up the body, and be built up.

⁴⁵ John 1:1-3

⁴⁶ John 8:58, 10:30, 13:1, 3

Questions to engage:

What are the barriers to fellowship?

What do you see as the benefits of being in community?

Why should you be in real community with other believers?

Is belonging to a local church in a meaningful way optional for Christians? Explain.

Do you have any previous wounding that you need to work through that would prevent you from being transparent and genuine in fellowship?

Action Points:

- If you are not a member of a local church, find a Gospel-centered and Bible-believing church where the pastor preaches expositional sermons from the Bible (preaching that is usually verse by verse, where the point of the sermon is the point found in the Scripture).
- Join a small group (some churches call these missional communities, life groups, or cell groups). Small groups are a great way to be in constant fellowship, be discipled, and belong to a group of believers that supports the local church.
- Invite other believers to grab a cup of coffee, eat lunch with others, or do an activity with others from church.
- Try to have a steady and consistent time of fellowship with other believers in your church. Try to make this a regular rhythm of your Christian life and ministry.
- Serve others in the church (help them move, repair items around their house, participate in meal trains, etc.).
- Help facilitate fellowship by shaking someone's hand at church you don't know. Learn their name and something about them. Truly listen to them. Build on that relationship over time and introduce them to your friends. Try to find connection points: "Oh, you are an engineer. My friend Toby is an engineer; let me introduce you to him."

“Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter.”
-Charles Spurgeon

“Talk to the Samaritan woman, if you cannot preach a sermon on the mountain; praise Jesus in your house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not in the public square; in the midst of your own household...”
-Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Jan 12.

Chapter 13. Evangelism

To be faithful to the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20), we must look at the nature of the Commission in light of how it was framed by Jesus. The Great Commission is aptly named because it is a command and not a suggestion. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples" (Mat. 28:19-20). This command is given directly after Jesus states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mat. 28:17). Likewise, in Acts 2, Jesus commands his disciples, saying, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). King Jesus, who has all authority and sits at the Father's right hand, has commanded us to evangelize. Evangelism for a believer is not optional. Evangelism is part of the kingdom plan laid out by King Jesus. We have been given the "ministry of reconciliation" and are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Even the Lord's Supper carries with it an element of evangelism. First Corinthians 11:26 states, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you *proclaim* the Lord's death until he comes." Evangelism should be embedded into the church's fabric and a commission that every believer is encouraged to fulfill upon becoming a believer.

Accordingly, we must also do the hard work of defining when the Gospel has actually been shared. Sending "good vibes," being friendly, and doing physical acts of service are not evangelism. These things are all in line with loving your neighbor and will promote the sharing of the Gospel, but they are not necessarily evangelism. Similarly, we should not use ambiguous language like "accept Jesus into your heart." When Paul shared the Gospel, he stated, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). There must be a clear Gospel presentation that informs the person that God, the creator of all things, is holy and will rightly punish sin (1 John 1:5; Rom. 2:5-8). All people have sinned and are alienated from a right relationship with God (Rom. 3:21-26, 5:10). Since man is sinful, he rightfully deserves eternal punishment. God sent his Son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life, to die on the cross for our sins (John 1:29). Jesus rose again on the third day (Rom. 3:21-26). God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).⁴⁷

The New Testament has countless examples of people sharing the Gospel. Jesus cast demons out of a man in Gerasene. Jesus then directed him to go and give his testimony, and he immediately "began to proclaim in Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him" (Mark 5:19-20). Andrew brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus and explained to him that he was the Messiah (John 1:41-42). Philip also brought Nathanael to Jesus, telling him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote" (John 1:45). After Jesus revealed himself to the woman at the well, she went and shared her testimony with everyone in the town. John records that many Samaritans in the town believed in Jesus "because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39). If this untrained woman who just became a believer can share the Gospel, then we also can share the good news of what Jesus has done for us.

⁴⁷ See: Chapter 1. The Gospel Foundation

Evangelism, then, is not a program (this is not to disparage programs). Evangelism for the believer is part of the normal rhythm of our new lives in Christ. This should radically change how we view life. When your kids are in sports, the sidelines are an opportunity to form real relationships with people that lead to sharing the Gospel and inviting people to church. While your kids are yelling at the top of their lungs and flinging themselves off the jungle gym, you can be creating relationships with parents equally in fear for their kids' lives. Join the PTO at your child's school, coach a team, or talk to your waiter. You should also begin sharing the Gospel with your children and family. Evangelism requires giving time to the unchurched and to unbelievers. Serious consideration should be given to spending more time with your friends who are unbelievers. I am not telling you to give up your Christian friends (after all, fellowship is important for the Christian life and for discipleship), but if 100% of our time is given to other Christians, how will we fulfill the Great Commission?

Action Points:

- Pray for your lost friends.
- Listen to the questions of your lost friends.
- Take a lost friend out to lunch, help them move, or help them at work.
- Make one new friend.
- Look for opportunities to start spiritual conversations.
- Ask a friend some spiritual questions:
 - What is his/her purpose in life?
 - Is there such a thing as sin, evil, or wrongdoing?
 - Have they ever gone to church?
 - What did they think about church if they have been to one?
 - Do they believe in an afterlife?
- Write out your testimony.
- Write out a recovery testimony.⁴⁸
- Share the Gospel.

⁴⁸ Following this section there will be two sections that will help you write out a testimony and a recovery testimony.

Action Point: Conversion Testimony

Overview:

After Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, she delivered her testimony with the entire town about how she met Jesus, and then they sought out Jesus (John 4:39, 42). The Samaritan woman had just come to faith and had no formal theological training. However, many of the Samaritans came to faith due to her simple testimony (John 4:39). The Apostle Paul included his testimony as part of his legal defense and evangelism multiple times before government officials (Acts 21:39-22:21; 26:2-32). Paul even includes his testimony in some of his letters in order to commend to them the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 1:11-17, Phil. 3:1-11). These biblical examples of believers delivering their testimonies should be an example to us in our modern context. Testimonies can be a natural and powerful way to share the Gospel in a variety of settings.

Instructions:

Write out the details about how you became a Christian. Then using the long format testimony form, write a shorter testimony that can be delivered quickly and concisely. Incorporate the elements of the Gospel: God (Creator, holy), Man's sin (separated from God, subject to wrath), Christ (Savior, sacrificial death), and Response (believe, repent, commit). Write out your testimony briefly describing:

Your life before you were a Christian:

- Did you become a Christian at a young age?
- Did you grow up in a Christian or non-Christian home?
- Did you have any spiritual beliefs?

Describe when you realized you needed Jesus and why you needed Jesus:

- When did you hear the gospel for the first time?
- Was it after a conversation with a friend or family member?
- Did it happen through some difficult circumstances in your life?

Describe your response and life change:

- Belief, repentance, commitment
- Life change that reflects the Gospel and the reality of a new life in Christ.

Short Testimony:

Action Point: Recovery Testimony

Overview:

Write out the details about how your being a Christian helped you with a problem or life need. Then using the long format testimony, write a short recovery testimony that can be delivered quickly and concisely. Incorporate the elements of the Gospel: God (creator, holy), Man's sin (separated from God, subject to wrath), Christ (savior, sacrificial death), and Response (believe, repent, commit). If possible, incorporate hope, forgiveness, community, fellowship, addiction recovery, and/or contentment in God.

Instructions:

Write out your testimony briefly describing

- The need or problem in your life.
- How you discovered help in Jesus, the Gospel, forgiveness, adoption, hope, a biblical change of perspective, fellowship, or community.
- Why are you thankful for your personal relationship with Jesus?

Notes:

The difference between the recovery testimony from the conversion testimony is that you are looking for ways in which God (Jesus, the Gospel, etc.) has delivered you through challenging issues related to your life. For instance, maybe you have been divorced, experienced the loss of a loved one, struggle with depression, have a problem with pride, are materialistic, are a former cancer patient, had an eating disorder, or dealt with any number of different addictions such as drugs, pornography, etc.

The point is that these difficult experiences can and will become effective bridges to sharing the Gospel with an unsaved world. Someone may be bitter against God because of a specific struggle in life; if you have shared a similar struggle, this can quickly become a connection point to share how Christ rescued you from hurt and pain. Remember, the key is not the story or the struggle. The point here is not to glorify sin, or yourself, but to glorify Christ! The goal is to always seek to share the gospel and point people to Christ. He is, after all, the only one who can fully deliver us from the bondage of sin and shame!

(See: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Romans 5:3-5).

Short Testimony:

Appendix 1: Family Discipleship

When Daniel was a youth, his hometown of Jerusalem was besieged and conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (Dan. 1:1). Daniel and three of his friends were taken to Babylon away from the comfort and security of their Jewish culture (Dan. 1:6). These Jewish boys were renamed with Babylonian names and taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans (Dan. 1:4). However, Daniel refused to defile himself with the “king’s food, or with the wine that he drank” (Dan. 1:8). Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and reached an agreement with the chief Babylonian official over him and the three other youths. The book of Daniel reveals that these Jewish youths were thrust into a difficult situation, yet brought God glory and handled themselves with wisdom. One can deduce that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Beltshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) had been faithfully disciplined prior to being taken into exile, due to how they stood firm in their faith when those trials came.

In chapter three, we also learned that Timothy was disciplined by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). Daniel and Timothy are excellent examples on why parents should disciple their children. Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The Proverbs also encourage us to lovingly correct our children and to encourage them to live a godly life (Prov. 22:15, 13; 29:15). The Proverbs also teach us that correction and training in godliness is loving (Prov. 3:12, 24).

Therefore, parents should disciple their children. Parents should read Scripture to their children and help them become biblically literate. Parents should teach their children sound doctrine and theology (this can be done through something as simple as a catechism⁴⁹). This training should also include learning how to make decisions as a believer through prayer, fasting, and searching the Scriptures. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus called us to “make disciples,” and we should not regulate the discipleship of our children to the back burner. The discipleship of children and youth is also not solely the responsibility of the church. As parents, we will be held accountable for our lack of discipleship or will be rewarded in heaven for the time we have invested in discipling our children.

⁴⁹ A catechism is a summary of Christian beliefs taught through the form of questions and answers.

Questions to Engage:

Why should believers be involved in the discipleship of their children?

What are some biblical examples of discipling children and youth?

What is the goal of discipling our children?

If you are a parent, what are some practical ways you can disciple your children?

What should discipleship of our children culminate into?

Action Points:

- If you are not a member of a local church, find a Gospel-centered and Bible-believing church where the pastor preaches expositional sermons from the Bible (preaching that is usually verse by verse, where the point of the sermon is the point found in the Scripture).
- Encourage your child to attend children's ministry and youth ministry events.
- Get to know the children's minister/director and youth minister. Find out what curriculum they use and what their plan is for training your children.
- Serve in the children's and youth ministry, if you are able.
- Find a mature believer who has raised Christian kids who you can then seek wisdom from in raising godly children (spend time with them and ask them questions). Talk to a pastor at a solid church, and ask if there is someone they could pair you with.
- Create a spiritual growth plan for your kids that includes: joining a church, regularly being in fellowship with other believers, praying, and reading God's word.
- Find a Bible reading plan to follow with your children.
- Find a small group or Bible study to join that has kids who attend.
- If you have children, are you discipling your children? If not, get to work.
- Complete this discipleship manual and train up your children.

Appendix 2: Recommended Reading:

ESV Study Bible (Crossway, 2012).

Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress, 2014).

Wayne Grudem, *Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Zondervan Academic, 2005).

John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Crossway, 2018).

John Piper, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* (Crossway, 2006).

Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Crossway, 2021).

J. Mac Stiles, *Evangelism* (Crossway, 2014).

John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (Modern English Version; Aneko Press, 2015).

For Kids:

Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Zonderkidz, 2007).

The Beginner's Bible, *The Beginner's Bible: Timeless Children's Stories* (Zonderkidz, 2016).

About:

This manual was written by Travis Boles. This manual is free for redistribution; we only ask that you do not charge for the resource. Please send me an email if you use the manual, and we welcome feedback.

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